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ELIZABETH FRY.

BY
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“Since my heart was first touched....I believe
I never have awakened from sleep, in sickness or in
health, by day or by night, without my first waking
thought being how best I might serve my Lord.”

ELIZABETH FRY.

•

ELIZABETH FRY.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS GOD LIKE ?

I say, to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet
In lane, highway, or open street—
That he, and we, and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above.

—TRENCH.

THERE are many people who have neither time nor opportunity to go in for a thorough course of study on art or science, who yet truly enjoy and appreciate beauty of form and colour when this is presented to them, and whose lives are gladdened and elevated by glimpses of loveliness they cannot explain or even minutely examine.

Faster and faster fly the wheels of Time,

and men and women who have day by day to strain every nerve to keep up in the race for life, are obliged regretfully to lay aside much that is enjoyable in literature and art, as too time-taking. The need of condensation is felt increasingly, for when much matter is put into small compass it is seen that lack of time, and not of appreciation, is the reason that many of these workers are unacquainted with the persons and events which live and pass outside their own particular sphere.

It is for such that this little sketch of the life of Elizabeth Fry is chiefly intended.

For those who have leisure there are more ponderous volumes, notably the memoir by her daughters, which is composed in great part of her own private journal, and which will richly repay the trouble of reading, by giving a more intimate knowledge and understanding of a wonderful character and an unparalleled work.

In this sketch we wish to present, not so much Elizabeth Fry's actions or the reforms

to which they have led, catalogued and counted as they may be, as Elizabeth Fry *herself*. The artist and the poet strive in vain to embody what they see and think with brush or pen, how much more difficult is it with cold and lifeless materials to reveal a complex human being, living and real as she stands before us,—this unique woman with a character all her own, original and intricate; how can we picture her as she stood before the despairing prisoner, and bonds were lightened, or bent over the dying bed, and death lost its terrors? And not only as the philanthropist, whose influence has had so great an effect on the management of criminals and lunatics, both in the United Kingdom and on the Continent, but as the woman of like passions with ourselves, as she gave colour to the light of common day to all who came in contact with her. 'One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin'; and were it only for the tears dropped over one little grave in Barking Burying Ground, we should feel that Elizabeth Fry, the enthusiast, the orator, the associate of

Kings and Princes, is infinitely dearer and nearer to us as sister than as Saint.

Some may object that it is exalting the human too much thus to seek to renew for ourselves a life that has passed away, and that we should simply look at the results of that life, and not at the instrument. This is a feeling very prevalent among many even of the most earnest, and thus help and encouragement is lost to many a wanderer in these days of doubt and uncertainty.

There are too few of such rare souls on this earth for us to lose one. Eagerly the world questions 'What is God like?' We point to unheeding Nature, and too often the world turns despairing from the pitilessness Science has shewn us all too plainly in this same Nature, and will not look at the lives of such as this woman, which are true pictures of God. Anthropomorphism is this? Yet they are surely more like the almighty conscious and omnipresent Will than the blind and fixed laws of the Universe.

All creation can be but the embodiment of a thought, and God cannot make what is higher or nobler than Himself, even to our finite understanding; wherever we find compassion and mercy and self-forgetting love pervading a life, shining through and conquering circumstance, where we can see nobility, which the world itself recognizes and bows to, there we look upon a reflection of God, and learn in the life spent for others that He is our Father, as in Nature we see that He is our Creator.

The work she accomplished is but the smallest part of Elizabeth Fry's "God likeness;" — it was the divine pity, the tireless energy, made out of weakness strong, the courage that dared to everstep conventionality and brave the world's censure for the sake of suffering humanity, the source of which her actions were but the feeble expression, that in her life really contradicts the hard thoughts we have of God, and bids us trust in the Creator who must be above His creation.

Let us then briefly follow this one woman,

too little known and loved by the nation she did so much for, in her path through life, and watching how the flowers of hope spring around her wherever she passes, even for the most sunken, while sin becomes more hateful in her pure presence, ask ourselves, If such is the woman, what must her God be like ?

CHAPTER II.

ENVIRONMENT.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, with drawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

O Love Divine! whose constant beam
Shines on the eyes that will not see,
And waits to bless us, while we dream
Thou leavest us because we turn from Thee.

WHITTIER.

WE cannot understand a book or a life until we know something of the surroundings amid which it has developed. The mind of every human being is tinctured to a great extent by the prevailing modes of thought which influenced education and environment. Of those who lived in the times in which Elizabeth Fry was born, this was peculiarly true.

The end of last century was an age of upheaval and destruction, both moral and political; before the storm fell old Kingdoms, old Aristocracies, and old Faiths. After centuries of voluptuous dreaming France awoke to the terrible reality of the Revolution. But the terror of 'la guillotine' was not the worst of that fearful time. Weary of superstition, and of evil hiding under a garb of religion, many thinkers in France and other parts of Europe threw Faith aside and worshipped Reason, only to find that they had missed their way and were without God.

Faith was fairly challenged, and instead of finding themselves borne on firm and assured ground, every man that reached a place of safety had to fight his way thither through doubt and unsparing criticism.

In such an age it was impossible for educated minds, however commonplace, to be quiescent, and the horrors of the French Revolution and its consequences shook men roughly from their careless and indifferent attitude.

At the same time that political and social

disturbance was moving Europe to its foundations, another change, possibly hastened in consequence of these other vast changes, was gradually taking place, especially in England. This was the alteration in the position and education of women, and the beginning of that total subversion of old ideas which has led to the establishment of women's colleges, and the general admittance of women into public life. Hitherto, since the days of good Queen Bess, our girls had been generally left in almost complete ignorance, except of domestic employment and a few shallow and artificial accomplishments, one notable exception to this rule being that among the Society of Friends the boys and girls received much the same training. But at this period many gifted women, shaking off the trammels of ignorance imposed upon them, appeared before the world as authors of no mean order, and the ordinary education of girls began to be more attended to. At the same time many among the *literati* found that when much that they deemed precious was overlooked or

scoffed at by men, it was understood and valued by the more intuitive minds of women, untrained as they were.

In such a town as Norwich—the birthplace of Elizabeth Fry — this change had full scope. A Cathedral town, it was not so much hurried into the whirl of commercial excitement and interest as many other places, and a number of the inhabitants had time for Literature, Art, and Pleasure. It soon became noted for its brilliant, clever and sceptical society.

Upon such a world, seething with vast interests, shaken by unrest and change, did baby Elizabeth first open her eyes on the 21st May, 1780.

Her ancestors for several generations had been Friends, and both her father and mother, John and Catherine Gurney, were members of the Society. Mrs. Gurney was the grand-daughter of Robert Barclay, the Quaker Apologist.

It is impossible for anyone thoroughly to comprehend Elizabeth Fry's career, who does not understand something of the principles and

ideas which make Friends so essentially a body by themselves, although they are one of the most broad minded of all sects. Comparatively few outside the Society have taken the trouble to study or understand Quakerism. The historic account of its rise under George Fox, and the persecution of many Friends because of their Peace and non-swearing principles, is well known, but its spirit is little understood.

Quakerism is the essence of Individualism. Every man stands alone responsible for his own actions and beliefs in the sight of God, with no other man between; and though the Bible is taken as the standard of conduct, it is not acknowledged as the sole communication of God's will to mankind. The Quaker belief is that in every man there is a spark of the Divine nature left, and that only as anyone is true to that light within him, which tells him he is doing wrong or right, independent of all creeds and doctrines, can he find and serve God. That on the spirit and not the outward form of any action depends its true value. Out of this arose

[many of Friends' minor 'testimonies,' as they called them, such as refusing to consider one place more consecrate than another, and using 'thee' and 'thou' when speaking to persons singly. Although some of these grew in time to be rather meaningless, they yet had their origin in the spirit that sought to be perfectly sincere in the very smallest details.

The Church Government of the Society is carried out by several meetings in adjoining localities sending representatives once a month to a meeting convened for business purposes, and several monthly meetings, in their turn, sending representatives to a quarterly meeting. All the Quarterly meetings send delegates to the General Congress or Yearly Meeting held every Spring in London. This is entirely democratic, and although there is no voting on the questions discussed, the 'feeling of the meeting' is obtained by the perfect freedom of speech which prevails.

The officers of the Church are, Elders, Overseers and Ministers, who are appointed by

the meeting. The ministers are unpaid, and are chosen only for the reason that they seem to have wisdom in helping others, and a divine call to do so.

Their manner of worship is to gather together and worship God in silence, until one or another, of either sex, believe that they receive a call to pray aloud or speak. All rites and ceremonies are dispensed with, as leading men to trust for salvation to their performance, rather than to integrity before God.

Friends also hold that true religion consists not only in preparing for another world, but in being the best possible citizens in this. Hence for them there is no great distinction between secular and religious, and political and social movements, in as far as they affect the well-being of their fellow men, claim their interest and attention as a body more than that of any other sect. 'I am a man, and whatever concerns mankind concerns me,' is a true principle of Friends. Intensely cosmopolitan, they regard war as essentially wrong, and as

upsetting the fundamental relations of brotherhood they hold should exist between all nations.

Such is the outline of principles, at once simple and profound, stern and comprehensive, which are instilled into the children of Friends from their earliest years, and which never fail to leave an abiding impression through any number of changes of opinion in later life.

Neither Mr. John Gurney nor his wife were so-called Plain Friends,—that is they did not keep to the minor observances which prevailed at this time among Friends, they neither dressed nor talked peculiarly, and mixed more with the gay and literary world than others, stricter than they, cared for; but they were true Friends in their principles and modes of thought, and from their very babyhood their children learnt that they were individually and seriously responsible each for themselves. Such an atmosphere cannot fail to make an active and intelligent mind think earnestly as to the way it goes.

To this mental earnestness and habit of introspection much that appears inexplicable in Elizabeth's after life may be traced.

Till 1786 the Gurney's home was in Norwich, but in that year they removed to Earlham, an ancient family seat not far out of the town, which all her life was dear to Elizabeth as her old home.

There the little maiden grew up among her brothers and sisters in no way remarkable. Except by her mother, and a few others, she was considered rather stupid and obstinate, and was really inclined to be "contrary." She was very fragile and extremely nervous; childhood was quite spoilt to her by terrors she was too reserved to tell anyone. She believed she might have been spared great after suffering if at this time her fears had been known and yielded to.

Happily for this delicate and susceptible nature, she had a mother both tender and wise. The child's love for this mother amounted almost to a passion, and she suffered

agonies at the mere thought of losing her.

Catherine Gurney was a woman of culture and power; she believed that a girl's mind, finely balanced as it is, needs training and replenishing as much as the stronger boy's, and while not neglecting household duties, girls should study languages, mathematics, history, and the natural sciences. In a beautiful paragraph, too long to quote here, she gives her reasons for everything she thinks a girl should learn, with its separate effect on the mind.

Though she only lived till Elizabeth was twelve years old, her influence, intellectual and moral, never died out of her child's life.

Without saying much, Catherine Gurney, led her children by her very life to think of God, and of His service as the highest joy on earth.

Under such holy mother-wings these children nestled till death took the mother, and the little half-fledged nestlings had to shift for themselves.

Those who have experienced the desolation of a motherless girlhood, will understand how

much of help and guidance these sisters missed at this critical period of their lives, from the loss of womanly tact and training; but perhaps it was this very breaking down of her support, which gave Elizabeth that self-dependence and power of acting on her own responsibility, which . was of such vital use to her in after life.

CHAPTER III.

A GIRL'S CHOICE.

Who that one moment has the least descried Him
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not and that are,—
Aye amid all men bear himself thereafter
Smit with a solemn and a sweet surprise,
Dumb to their scorn and turning on their laughter
Only the dominance of earnest eyes.

F. W. MYERS.

WHEN we next see Elizabeth the frail child
has grown into the tall, graceful, attractive maiden, still sensitive, delicate and reserved, but with the charm of a cultured and vivacious mind.

Though not so handsome as some of her sisters, the sweet thoughtful face, surrounded with masses of light goldie hair, had a delicate loveliness about it, like an old-fashioned sketch with just a touch of colour to relieve the outlines.

Her culture of mind arose more from a quick

and retentive observation than from study. She never cared much for books, and after her mother's death her reading had been desultory and fragmentary, but this very circumstance gave an originality to her thought, which made intercourse with her a real intellectual pleasure.

She and her sisters are surrounded by the highest mental activity and the most refined enjoyments, and have all they could desire of beauty, both in dress and surroundings.

As we look at this picture we think how satisfied and happy this lovely and admired girl must be, living no vapid or debasing existence, but a life crowned with the noblest and most elevating pleasure.

Seeing this fair exterior, it is most touching to read her private journal at this time, in which she used to write her thoughts and feelings as if speaking to a friend. She describes herself as 'a ship without a pilot,' 'seeing everything through a black medium,' and worst of all that she can understand nothing, and doubts everything.

Sooner or later to every man or woman

there comes an awakening, a sort of spirit-stir, which even in savage nations arouses man to an overpowering sense that he is not merely a higher animal. To a man this arousal frequently comes in a rush of self-detestation, a humiliating realization of how far he comes below even his own standard of purity and goodness, and he arouses himself from his fool's paradise to fight with and overcome Temptation. But with women it is generally different; some glimpse of the pain and travail of the world comes to them in the midst of their gay, thoughtless lives, and with terror and amazement they gaze on suffering they are helpless to relieve. Then the mother-life awakes within them, and they go out, at least in spirit, from their brilliant surroundings, to seek some balm for those wounded spirits. They have learnt that life is sad and they would fain ease it. Such is the secret story of many a woman's life, and of Elizabeth Fry's.

When she was about fifteen her father took her, after repeated requests, to see the women at the House of Correction, at Norwich. Into

the heart of the shy, quiet, little girl, shrinking by her father's side, with her slender wee hands locked fast round his arm, the piteous look in the faces of these women, whose lot was so different from hers, sank deep; half unconscious and irrepressible rose in her heart the terrible enquiry 'If this is the world, where is God?'

From about the time she was sixteen till she was eighteen, Elizabeth's 'buried life' consisted of struggle after struggle to do the right she saw, and in her diary are constant expressions of contempt for herself at her failures, and with scorn she calls herself 'a fine lady' and 'a bubble.'

The nervous attacks from which she suffered much, caused her at times great physical and mental depression, which makes parts of this journal very pathetic, especially in contrast to her external life. In her own words, she wanted "some one to lean upon." It was about this time that some help came to Elizabeth from two friends who were among the many who

frequented their house. One was a Roman Catholic, but a man of very broad views; in every discussion which arose he would turn to the New Testament, in which he said he found answers which really satisfied him. The other was Miss Galton, afterwards Mrs. Schimmelpennick; she had known the struggle and despair of doubt, and the thoughtful Gurney girls respected her honesty, and when gradually her views changed and she accepted the faith she had once renounced, it was a great encouragement to them.

But Elizabeth wanted something more personal. She did not much care at this time for going to meeting, and partly from ill-health almost gave up attending, until her dearly-loved uncle, John Gurney, used his influence with her to encourage her to go, pointing out that she should use every opportunity of finding God; but we can imagine that the hours of silent restless heart-searching, seeking rest and finding none, that she must have endured there, made it very wearisome.

A little before Elizabeth was eighteen, the sisters

were rejoiced to hear that an American Friend, William Savary, from the yearly meeting, was coming on a visit to their meeting. Richenda Gurney said they always looked forward to such visits as being a little change.

All seven sisters went to meeting that Sunday morning. After a short time William Savary rose to speak. One of her sisters, who had been taken up with admiring Elizabeth's somewhat smart attire, was amazed to see her apathetic attitude change to one of earnest attention, and big tears begin soon to roll down her cheeks. All the remaining time she wept uncontrolably, a most unusual thing for the proud reserved girl; and after the meeting astonished everyone by asking to go to her uncle's house to meet William Savary. Of the words he spoke that day we have no record. but the effect on this unsatisfied girl was that she 'felt there was a God.'

Her great fear was that excitement and not Truth was the cause of this feeling, and that it would soon pass away. For many months

following, her vigorous mind, naturally sceptical, kept her in constant dread of being led away by feeling, to trust on insufficient grounds to those 'Truths that never can be proved.' Better no guide than a false one, was her unhesitating judgment.

At this point the crisis of her life took place. In 1798 Elizabeth was taken up to London by her father, and left there to see the world.

With all the zest of a young girl unsatiated with pleasure she entered into the gaiety and novelty of a London Season, in the highest and most refined Society, where she was well fitted to shine.

Here she saw the very best side of worldly enjoyment and was introduced to some of the most distinguished men and women of the day.

On Sundays, and some evenings when there was no opera or play on, she would go to Friends' meeting, where she heard William Savary and others like-minded speak.

Seldom even in these days, and still more

in those, is a girl placed where two such opposite roads meet as represented by the whirl of gaiety and those quiet little meetings, and left perfectly free to take which path she chose, as was this girl, and rare indeed was the choice she made.

Without any outside compulsion or religious enthusiasm, this young and eager soul turned deliberately from the brilliance of the best the world could give to follow the 'via crucis.'

It is easy to appear to be in 'the world but not of it, if every circumstance of life and training has placed a person out of its reach: it is when one is brought into fascinating contact with it that the test is real.

This sunny-haired girl was really not of the world, neither its glamour nor its homage could satisfy her starry nature, while she felt in the quiet of the plain meeting-house that there was something which could fill her life if she could only attain to it, and at all costs she determined to get it if it could be had.

It must have seemed a pity then that

Society should lose one so fitted to influence all around her for good, by her earnest purity and elevated mind, and that she should withdraw into the comparative obscurity and peculiarity of plain Quakerism.

Had, however, Elizabeth Gurney chosen differently, she might have lived a beautiful and useful life, but the work that Elizabeth Fry accomplished could not have been done, and never here can we tell to how many perishing souls this one woman's *via crucis* proved the *via lucis*.

After this, as she wrote thirty years later, she gave up going to all places of public amusement, because she saw that even if they did not hurt her personally they tended to promote evil, and behind the scenes led many from the paths of right and chastity; so henceforth she turned to give her mind wholly to seeking God and His will.

She returned home full of this determination. Her choice was made, but the struggle was not over.—

“We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.”

And it was through months of silent self-repression and painful questionings that Elizabeth became a plain Friend.

It was a time of real conflict. Night after night she dreamed that she was being washed away by a dark rough sea with no help near, till one night, as she dreamed the same terrifying dream, she thought she was lifted on to a rock far beyond the reach of the hungry waves.

From this she took some comfort, though greatly afraid of superstition.

She had no intention of becoming in any way peculiar, and especially did she shrink from joining with strict Friends, lest her wish to do so should arise from a merely human love for, and admiration of, those who had been such help to her.

Her family, too, were opposed to the severity

of dress and speech observed among those who were so called, deeming it unwise and likely to lead to peculiarity for peculiarity's sake. Elizabeth was also much influenced by her sister Rachel. These two had always been special friends, and Rachel grieved bitterly over what she deemed her sister's folly; for several months she would plead with Elizabeth to join once more in all their ordinary pursuits and pleasures, and only desisted when she saw it grieved her sister without making any difference in her opinions.

After long hesitation, and particularly after a visit to some Friends at Colebrook, Elizabeth felt so sure it was her right course to take her stand as a plain Quakeress, though willing to wait till her friends thought so too, that they gave their reluctant sanction to her becoming such, and this she remained till the end of her life.

She gradually renounced many little pleasures and brightnesses on conscientious grounds, changed her pretty dresses for the plain gown and kerchief of Friends, and gave up her favourite

amusements of dancing and singing. She had been passionately fond of both, especially singing, but she felt they moved and excited her too much, and that the emotion caused by music was 'not true Religion,' which she believed to be 'in a deeper recess of the heart where no earthly passion can produce it.'

All through her diary at this time there are touching illusions to little dissensions that arose about these and other scruples of hers, and to the pang with which she refused to dance with her brother John, or annoyed her father, for whom, she writes, she would sacrifice anything. She also took up what was a great cross to her sensitive nature, that of saying 'thee' and 'thou.' She describes, with some humour, how she ran away on catching sight of one of her fashionable friends because she dared not say 'thou' to him.

That these abnegations were unnecessary and absurd is the verdict of many in these days, but looking over the finished life, we can see that without the self-government and self-control

which were the outcome of these minutiae of Elizabeth's discipline of herself, the work she had afterwards to perform could not have been done nearly so effectively, if at all.

A man in training for rowing or running needs to give up many things it would be meaningless for those not entering the contest to abandon, but no one thinks the trainer has made a mistake when he insists on these sacrifices. Nor has God: He knows the future of every life and the circumstances in which every human being will be placed, and He knows what He is about when He prepares them for those circumstances. Yet when He trains His people for a particular purpose, the world jeers at the obedience shown to what they believe to be His will.

Meanwhile Elizabeth occupied herself in loving service to all around her, beginning at home, where she was a helpful friend to her brothers and sisters, and then extending it outside to rich and poor alike.

By her tireless energy she established a

school, which increased from one little boy to seventy children. These she taught all by herself, without assistance.

During a visit to the North with her father in 1799, Elizabeth was chosen one of the Committee for examining the children of Ackworth school. A characteristic little scene took place while they were here. When the Committee, which was composed wholly of young members, came to make their report, and they were asked their opinion, none would speak. Elizabeth, seeing the meeting was delayed, although extremely shy and nervous, braced herself to the occasion and broke the ice by telling her mind on the examination entrusted to her. A straw shows which way the wind blows, and the girl who, though trembling, took the disagreeable initiative on herself when she saw no one else was inclined to do it, was made of the same stuff as the woman who afterwards braved the world's opinion to take hope and light to the vilest and most degraded of her kind.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BACK OF THE WARP AND WOOF.

Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live, and burn and move
When we shall be no more;—the world has seen
A type of peace; and as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye
After long years, some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.
SHELLEY.

QUICKLY the months sped on, uneventful save to Elizabeth's hidden life, and once more the scene is changed. Scarcely past the first bloom of girlhood, Elizabeth Gurney is the promised bride of Joseph Fry of London.

It was not without much hesitation that she had accepted his offer; she wished to use her life to the best possible advantage for God as far as she could see, and was fearful that marriage at this time of mental disquietude and uncertainty, would prove a tie to mere earthly things.

There seemed in her mind a prophetic stir of coming duties which would be outside the usual sphere of a woman's life, very vague and unformed, but enough to make her uneasy at the prospect of binding herself to wifehood, and possible motherhood. To the best of her ability she deliberately faced this question in the solitude of that secret place of judgment, which this girl, child almost as she was, had made for herself during those months of self-conquest she had passed through; and she made it a prayer, as we see from her diary, that if she was to have a home and children of her own her duties might lie with them, but that if in the future she would have to leave 'the safe sweet corner by the fireside,' it might be in single life.

But God knew best, and gave her a preparation better than she asked, and His negative to that prayer, even we can see, was filled with richer blessing than an affirmative could have been.

At this time she confessed to a cousin that

to marry would upset all her pet theories and plans for herself in life. But after somewhat prolonged and painful deliberation, in the quaint Quaker phrase, Elizabeth 'felt free' to marry, and accepted Joseph Fry.

We wonder if he realized at all then what a rare and precious treasure was that heart, which its young owner gave him with such hesitation and so many fears, lest in being so given it should not be so wholly true to the task of seeking only God!

They were married, after the simple but impressive manner of Friends, at the Norwich Meeting House, on the 19th of August, 1800; and, after a brief stay with his parents at Plashet House, Joseph Fry took his bride to the more gloomy Mildred's Court, in London, where he, as junior partner in the business firm to which he belonged, was obliged to live. In this house they remained till 1809, and here they had five children born to them.

At first Elizabeth Fry found her new life rather difficult. She had married into a family

belonging to the straitest order of Friends, and soon discovered that she was considered quite a 'worldly' member of it. At home her difficulty had been not to try those she loved by unnecessary strictness while keeping firmly to what she considered right, here her sensitive nature suffered from the scruples of others, while yet she feared to be drawn into the profession of more than she felt. This gradually righted itself as Elizabeth Fry, still keeping her breadth of mind, cast in her lot more completely with that of her husband and his people.

Another perplexity was Family Reading. It had not been the custom in her husband's home, but with Elizabeth it was a principle to acknowledge God, as a family, at the beginning of the day. The young wife had the courage to introduce it, although with a great effort, for she did not like it to appear that she and her husband, both young people, should profess more than those who had lived there before them, and especially hard did she find it to remind her husband before his relatives, or the

Friends who often stayed with them. Nevertheless, she gained her point, and eventually the approbation of those whose opinion she valued.

During the first May, and in the succeeding years, Mildred's Court became quite a resort of Friends who came to London for the Yearly Meetings, as well as at other times.

The years that followed Elizabeth's marriage were very quiet. The diamond seemed quite buried, only stray gleams of an exceptional character shone now and again through the duties and cares of an ordinary life.

The Indian weaving all day at his loom sees not the symmetrical pattern as it grows on the other side: he places the threads as he had been taught they should go, and when at night he turns his work the colours show fair in perfect order. So the lives of nearly all those who have shone out in any kind of splendour have had periods like this, and only after the lapse of silent years is the web turned and the result seen.

No one who watched the 'care-worn wife

and mother,' as at twenty-seven Elizabeth described herself, making the wheels of an ordinary household run smoothly, cheering her husband's life as a real helpmate, and training her little children, would have dreamed of the strange and stirring future in store for her; nor how that one weak woman-hand should by the strength of indignation and love shake the iniquitous prison system of that day to its foundations, and be the main instrument in introducing an entirely new regimen.

Meanwhile she was the centre of a very sweet home circle, besides husband and children, one of her favourite brothers, Samuel Gurney, made Mildred's Court his home whilst learning business in London. In 1804 Joseph Fry's mother died, after which Elizabeth became more than ever a real daughter and stay to her husband's father.

Nor did she allow these pressing home claims to shut her out entirely from the world of suffering human beings in the largest and saddest city in the world, where, unless we are

on the look out to help others, they may die almost at our doors without our knowing.

She was not content with merely giving money, but whenever possible would try to gain admittance to homes in great contrast to her own happy one, often finding her way to places from entering which the boldest might shrink. It had not then become fashionable to go "slumming," and rare indeed was such a visitant in those miserable homes. Once on a bitter day a woman holding a little child, evidently very ill with whooping cough, stopped and begged of her. Mrs. Fry asked where she lived, but after a few evasive answers the woman moved off. Her heart swelled with pity for the child, Elizabeth Fry followed and tracked the woman to a wretched den in a most disreputable locality. Entering, she found to her horror that on the floor lay a number of children utterly uncared for, several being in the last stages of disease. The next day she sent her doctor there, but the woman, whom they learned farmed these children from the parish, had disappeared.



Such were the places into which she would fearlessly go. She also became a Visitor to the Friends' School and Workhouse, at Islington. It was a great effort to her to speak before others, even to these children, and yet, as her own heart, grew fuller of comfort, she began to feel she ought to pass it on openly to others. Her impassioned nature would not always let her rest passively in this placid life. Women of capability often have their times of feeling, like a war-horse hearing the sound of the battle, yet bound down to a cart, and Elizabeth Fry was no exception. Physical weakness enforced long rests which were extremely irksome to her, and in 1808 we find passages in her diary showing how she sometimes chafed, and felt keenly the difference between her present position and that of usefulness to the cause of God on earth which in her girlhood she had hoped to occupy.

Though she took great pains to have everything in perfect order her tastes were not really domestic, and to her, as to almost all high-spirited and intellectual women, the details

of household management were a weariness to the flesh.

This, however, did not prevent her from performing these feminine duties bravely and well. Then, and in after years, her account books and arrangements were kept with business-like precision and exactness, and if sometimes bitter tears of disappointment and impatience fell over them no one but God knew till years after when those tears were wiped away.

Her father-in-law's illness, which preceded his death in 1808, was cheered by her sweet presence, and soon after this she went to nurse her sister Hannah through scarlet fever, though not without many misgivings on account of her little ones, and especially of her baby. Elizabeth Fry was not a tragic heroine and did not scorn fear such as this, but we love her all the better for being a true woman and not a salamander.

CHAPTER V.

THE DELIVERER UNBOUND.

Witness the women, of his children sweetest,
Scarcely earth seeth them but earth shall see,
Thou in their woe thine agony completest—
Christ, and their solitude is nigh to thee.

Eager and faint, impassionate and lonely,
These in their hour shall prophesy again,
This is His will who hath endured, and only
Sendeth the promise where He sends the pain.

F. W. MYERS.

THE immediate result of his father's death was that Joseph Fry removed his household to Plashet, the beautiful family house in Essex.

To his wife, the change from smoky, murky London to the quiet of a country home, surrounded by extensive grounds, was an exquisite pleasure. The bustle and din of the great city had told on the sensitive frame more than anyone had realised, and those who know how greatly the mind is dependent on the body will

understand what unspeakable refreshment to the tired young mother's brain and heart were the country sights and sounds of the Fry's new home.

To the household at Plashet her tall, graceful figure, followed by two or three little ones laden with trowels and baskets, setting out on some gardening expedition, became a familiar sight. She loved flowers, this quiet self-repressed woman, so like a flower herself in her nervous frailty, so sweet, yet instinct with silent life and power. Primroses were her special favourites, and in her spare hours she and the children filled every nook and corner of the plantations with them.

In the autumn of this year Elizabeth's sixth child—a boy—was born. She was still very prostrate when suddenly summoned to Earlham to say farewell to her dying father.

Time for one lingering loving clasp, one parting blessing, and he was gone. Kneeling by his side, one of her soft hands still grasped in his cold one, Elizabeth forgot herself in a vivid

realization of the freedom gained by that father so peculiarly dear to her, and almost unconsciously her lips, sealed for so many years by reserve and timidity, were opened, and, to the surprise of all, she praised God for the dead and prayed aloud for the living.

Thus through agony were the silent lips first opened that hereafter should speak comfort to so many forlorn and despairing hearts, and the voice first raised that should thrill with hope through the very lazar house and charnel of Earth's degradation and misery. Thus ever and ever 'out of suffering God bringeth gain,' ever and ever 'our cedars must fall around us ere we see the light behind.'

Elizabeth Fry was not one of those to whom it is easy or natural to speak out their deepest feelings; beside being extremely reserved she had a horror of cant and a great fear of speaking about things she saw but dimly, but for sometime past she had felt that she should not keep to herself the peace and comfort she had found.

Amid the sorrows and struggles of the surging human life around her she had seen how useless was the best she could give alone, had seen that compassion was helpless, and love all unavailing to succour or to save one tempted soul, but it was only in her own pain that she found strength to say to such—

“Dear heart, I have found the Master,
He is sweet beyond compare,
He will save and comfort thy weary soul,
He will make thee white and fair;
Not as I gave thee will He give,
But wine divine and rare.”

At her father's funeral Elizabeth spoke publicly the same words she had said in his room.

From that day, in spite of nervousness and self-questionings, she began to speak at meetings and at various other times and places. Well was it for many a way-worn heart that this woman belonged to a Society which allows public utterance to all its members, where neither sex nor any artificial barrier is interposed to hinder the expression of a heartfelt message, and where, at least in theory, only such messages are acceptable.

The effect on Elizabeth Fry herself of this dreaded ordeal, from which she had shrunk so long, was entirely good. In thinking of those to whom she spoke, and of the Master whose message she believed herself to be delivering, she forgot her nervous terror of hearing her own voice, and in giving expression to the eager spirit-life within her, ideas hitherto vague and ill-defined took shape and reality, and her store of knowledge and comfort and hope increased in the very act of giving out. That she undertook preaching from a sense of duty and not from any desire for notoriety is shewn both by her letters and diary.

In writing to a friend she says that, as way had been made for her, she dared not stop, but that her wish was that her speaking should end as soon as possible if it were not the right way for her to work; she trembled lest from any secret wish to exalt herself she should be led into a course which would hinder the perfect performance of her duties as wife and mother, and in seeking to help those out-

side she should neglect the commoner and nearer trust.

It was not long before she was encouraged by being formally recognized by Friends as a minister. This recognition in the Society implies that the members believe such an one to have been gifted with a real power to serve others, not as an orator or learned person, but as one who living near to God in daily life had clearer insight than others into Spiritual things, and a Divine Gift to speak straight to the hearts and consciences of those that heard. Those that listened to Elizabeth Fry even in these early days felt that there was something special in her speaking, not due to eloquence, but to something deeper and truer in her than in most people.

Neither belief nor speech was conventional-ity to this intense and earnest nature. After the yearly meeting, during which she had been recorded as a minister, from entries in her diary we find she felt to have had fresh evidences that there truly was a God and One who could

communicate real help in this weary life through those who would speak just what they believed sincerely to have learned from Him. A strange and humble confession from a preacher. This she had learned, she writes, from the words of others, and from having been able herself to minister *almost*, she can believe, from the living source.

"I find it," writes this brave true woman, "an awful thing to rise amongst a large assembly, and unless much covered with love and power, hardly know how to venture."

About this time she was brought into contact with several belonging to different sects, and at a point when most women would have been in great danger of degenerating into narrowness, her powerful mind overstepped the barriers of outward forms and began to realize the unity which earnest souls, however widely differing in opinion, may feel, as being together seekers after God and His Eternal Truth. Those, too, who knew her learnt to understand in some degree this unity of spirit, her simplic-

ity breaking down prejudice in a way that the greatest self-assertion could never have done.

In the end of 1811 she was in Norwich during the time of a meeting of the Bible Society. People belonging to all sects and parties attended it, and many of them stayed or took their meals at the hospitable house at Earlham.

Mrs. Fry had a great dread of feeling obliged to speak before the clergymen and others assembled.

One day as they were at dinner, thirty-four being present, just as the meal was ended, and during the moment of silence observed among Friends, to the great surprise of most present, Elizabeth Fry knelt and prayed. Astonishment and prejudice were soon forgotten, and as the low clear tones vibrated a wave of genuine emotion swept over even the most conventional present. She had forgotten herself, and those kneeling around her also forgot all save that from an earnest heart rose the expression of many a secret desire and longing of their

own, and for a few minutes at least amid tears, of which they were not ashamed, human need stretched unfeigned hands to the God who heareth such prayer.

After she rose several others spoke, differing views were lost sight of, and they felt that they were all in one common brotherhood.

In her diary Elizabeth Fry noted with surprise that one poor woman should have been the means of bringing all that company so near to one another, and causing them to praise God.

During these years Mrs. Fry's time was by no means all taken up with public speaking. At Plashet her name became a household word by many a fireside. She did not shut herself up in her beautiful home, but was a real friend to her neighbours of all classes.

Then and ever she hated the so-called religion that leads those who have all they can wish for to go and preach, à la William Partridge, to the ignorant and starving, with no thought of the ache of physical hunger, the

darkness of ignorance or the despair of grinding poverty.

When she went among those that were poor it was with hands filled for their relief and comfort in this life, with a heart of fruitful sympathy for such mundane things as an ailing child, or the thin garments and meagre fare of the growing boys and girls which, pinch and save as they would, the patient mother and hard working father could not improve. And not only to the 'deserving poor' did she extend this sympathy; she shewed it especially to the inhabitants of a miserable hamlet called Irish Row, about half a mile from Plashet House. To this dirty and disreputable place came a new influence, not that of a white-winged angel, whose presence would hardly have seemed congruous, but of a white-souled woman who knew the worries and cares of daily life, and understood all about wakeful nights with the baby, and the romping children who made it so difficult to keep all clean and tidy. Knowing these things, she did not begin by preaching,

but by encouraging cleanliness and order with little helpful rewards, and by her loving and sympathizing visits, in which she tried to teach the warm-hearted but thriftless Irish women something of her own neatness and method.

After rendering such practical aid Mrs. Fry tried to give them something to satisfy the desires, which, relieved from the most pressing cares, these people in their darkness began to feel.

With the consent of the priest, whose esteem and allegiance had been won by her kindness to his flock in a time of great want and distress, she gave Bibles to many of them, and such booklets as she liked and thought would meet their need.

She had a little medical knowledge in the simpler cases of illness, and was particularly strong on the necessity of vaccination. With her own hands she vaccinated many children in the neighbourhood, and succeeded in almost stamping the deadly smallpox out of the village by her assistance as to this.

She was called once to see a Gypsy child who was very ill in the encampment at Plashet she nursed him back to life herself, and ever after exercised a great influence over the Gypsies who came there annually.

Soon after the Frys came to live at Plashet Mrs. Fry, with the aid of a young woman named Harriet Howell, and several others, succeeded in getting a school for girls established for the parish of Eastham on the Lancasterian system.

Meantime her household cares grew more onerous, two more little ones being added to her family in 1811 and 1812, while the increased number of servants required more constant and watchful superintendence.

Thus amid the details, joys and cares of such a life as any earnest loving woman might lead, the hour drew nearer in which all Europe should ring with the name of the obscure Quakeress, and there should shine upon her hitherto uneventful life something of that fierce light which beats upon a throne.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

Is there not wrong too bitter for atoning,

What are these desperate and hideous years?

Hast Thou not heard Thy whole creation groaning,

Sighs of a bondsman, and a woman's tears.

F. W. MYERS.

THE storm had burst, long years of oppression and despair in France had culminated in the Revolution and the Reign of Terror, the 'canard,' treated like brutes, embruted, had stopped at nothing in their hideous revenge. It was an age of retribution; shuddering, and with strange wonder, the world watched the reaping of the whirlwind from the sowing of the wind, yet without learning that the wild beast fostered in man will surely spring one day; as when Rome long ago tried the experiment to her own destruction, so deaf and blind and speechless men still wrought their own ruin, and when it came cursed, not themselves and their

folly, but the God who had warned them.

In the prisons of England, and indeed of all Europe, carelessness, neglect, and cruelty were exercising their disasterous effects, so that crime increased with an alarming rapidity to the surprise of those who would not study the cause.

The gleam of light brought into these dark places by the noble labours of John Howard, had died out, the reform in the laws were almost unattended to. Those who entered a prison, condemned or uncondemned, were considered lawful prey by the officials and their fellow prisoners, and neither sex nor age was respected.

Into small and fetid rooms prisoners were crowded with no attempt at classification, and those who had committed venial offences were placed with the most desperate characters.

Each prison was a training school for vice of every description, those who went in comparatively pure often came out versed in every kind of devilry.

In England especially prison management became notoriously disgraceful.

From Government reports in 1818 we find, that out of the five hundred and eighteen prisons in the United Kingdom, fifty-nine had no separate division whatever for the women, and one hundred and thirty-six had only one. These prisons were not the well-built, well-ventilated buildings of the present day, but old gaols, many with underground dungeons, and when these were full, ancient castles and gate houses were utilized without regard to their suitability. There were only two gaol deliveries a year, so that amid the horrors of the living graves an innocent person might be kept, and frequently was, for six months, and perhaps only to go out to die of disease contracted there.

The prisoners were completely at the mercy of the keepers, themselves of the very dregs of society. Torture and abuse of every kind passed unnoticed; money was wrung unsparingly from the unhappy prisoners or their friends for every alleviation allowed, and innocent persons, or

prisoners whose sentence was out, were often detained for alleged debts to these harpies ; while the very food was irregularly given, and in some gaols the inmates were almost entirely dependent on outsiders for subsistence.

Over all this misery spread the dark wings of death—not only did damp and gaol-fever and despair claim their victims, but the gallows reaped an abundant harvest. Three hundred minor crimes sent men and women to the scaffold.

The ill-appointed prisons were too full and too loathsome, the overplus of prisoners must die to make room for others. The murderers and the utterer of a false one pound note died the same terrible and unnatural death. In every assize town hanging was as common as daylight, and those who witnessed public executions say that no words can adequately describe the horrors of those scenes.

Society cared not ; what were such creatures to the rich and the happy ? Let us eat, drink, and be merry, it is only our brother who dies to-morrow. What recked it to pampered women

with all they could wish for, that the haggard young mother, from whose despairing gaze they turned so disdainfully, died the death of shame for stealing a piece of cloth in which to wrap her shivering baby,* or that little children, pretty and innocent as their own, grew familiar in those grim schools, with crimes they would shudder to hear mentioned, and come out from the gaol only too soon to return to the condemned cell. Nothing caring, they passed by on the other side.

Wearily in these places of misery passed the hours of the day, vacant but for occasional fights with each other, or with the horrible vermin that infested the open sewers which in some of the gaols ran through the cells,—more wearily dragged the slow hours of the night when the clank of chains fell heavily and the stillness was broken by the moaning of fettered women and the crying of little children.

Surely the eyes of God rested not on these charnel houses, nor to His ear came the wail

* A fact.

of the oppressed and tortured creatures lingering there !

Yet in one quiet home in Plashet, where a woman knelt and prayed, He was preparing a deliverer for those who deemed Him deaf and blind.

It is Newgate in 1813. Hell above ground men call it. Three hundred women are huddled together in the part known as the untried wing. Even the noxious atmosphere cannot keep out the bitter February chill, and the poorly-fed women shiver in scanty clothes, while the children creep close to one another in the corners of the wards.

Many of the prisoners are drinking liquor purchased at the prison tap with the proceeds of begging from any strangers venturesome enough to come within earshot. Few indeed they were, and the Governor himself, even with a military guard, hardly dared to enter this part of Newgate.

Only separated from the prisoners by double iron gratings the lowest of the London rabble

held communication with their friends within the prison.

The long dark February day drags on, wilder and fiercer grows the clamour as the prisoners infuriated by drink quarrel and swear, while new-comers gaze terrified on the crowd of loathsome and degraded creatures who hardly seem like women.

The door clicks, who dares to enter this pandemonium? Doubtless some new victim, one more hungry mouth to share the food already too scarce—curse the fates that send her!

A sudden stillness, and murmur of surprise. No new bloated or haggard face marked by vice, and hardened by despair meets their astonished gaze, but, instead, looks of compassion in pitying eyes.

Two women have entered both dressed as Quakeresses, on the taller all eyes are turned. She, with her keen glance, seems to be taking in every detail. Pure as a visitant from another world stands Elizabeth Fry among those fallen women, and with her another Friend, Anna Buxton.

Not a hand was stretched out to rob those two, unprotected save by their fearless trust, as they moved from one to another, their watches hanging openly at their sides, and the silence is scarcely broken save by a gentle pitiful voice and low sobs from those who had never before seen that sister-look bent on them, in the eyes of an undegraded woman.

The most hardened felt a thrill as they looked into the sweet face, so calmly strong, and still young, and met there divine, compassionate love, when they would have expected scorn and disgust, while into their dark souls gleamed "dimly," a sense of hope and forgiveness.

The next day, and the next, they came bringing with them garments for the half-clothed women, which Elizabeth Fry with her children and friends had made, and then their visits had to cease. But before they left, amid that rabble, they knelt hand in hand and prayed aloud for those, who too were God's children. Almost all knelt; to some

childish hours came back, while others heard prayer for the first time, and they wept, looking up for one moment through the human love to the Divine.

That hour lived on—to the poor captives with a whisper of mercy and pardon—to one at least of those two so alien to that sad place, as an appeal to her from helpless and hopeless sisters, which, though unable then to respond to it, she could never forget.

In the valley of the shadow of Death, though none yet knew it, the day had dawned.

CHAPTER VII.

RIPENING.

Say not the struggle naught availeth
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The evening faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

* * * * *

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through cracks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in the main.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

WE must go back a little to see how Elizabeth Fry came to be in Newgate.

In the Autumn of 1812 it was proposed that the Frys should winter in London, at Mildred's Court. Mrs. Fry very much dreaded the prospect, eventually settled, and the family moved there in November.

We get little glimpses of Elizabeth's inner life at this time from her diary. Hers was a nature that could pass through experiences in a few hours which, with others less finely

constituted, might extend perhaps over years. Such would hardly understand passages in which she records passing through so much during a public meeting that she felt quite shaken; or feeling 'alive spiritually.'

Probably, too, this life of hers was all the more intense from being hidden. Seldom do we find any mention of her opening her heart to a friend about herself or her feelings, and amid a busy life surrounded by others she seems to have lived a somewhat lonely existence, although she had strong and sympathetic affections, giving her love freely to those around her, and being loved devotedly in return. The deepest part of her nature she seldom revealed, nor had she given it expression could she have found much response or comprehension. It was this craving the world of sense and even the world of thought could not meet or satisfy, that in her girlhood caused her to take the otherwise inexplicable course of turning from a rich full life to one that seemed so unnatural to her. Dimly as

she then knew God she felt that to know Him as she conceived it possible, would be to be satisfied; and all through her life, through doubts, and mistakes and suffering, we see how that satisfaction grew, till she had not only Peace herself but was able to impart it to other longing souls.

In giving out, her own spiritual life advanced rapidly, and those who knew her came to look upon her almost as an oracle. Early in 1813 Friends gave her a minute to visit the monthly meetings. Her loving nature could not but enjoy being appreciated in what had been so great an effort to her, and she was wise enough to see that there was great danger in this of her becoming self-conceited.

Many who have started as earnestly and honestly as she have been led by praise and applause to speak for effect when it is all up with any good they may do. At all times public speaking is difficult as a way of really helping others, and the change to this specious form of hypocrisy is felt at once.

It was at this critical time that Elizabeth was asked by some friends, who had visited one or two condemned criminals in Newgate, to go and see the destitute state of the women there in the bitter weather then prevailing.

Brought face to face with such awful reality, before which they were powerless, any earnest man or woman who honestly sought God, not only for self but for mankind, to learn if there were healing for the unconsolated world, must have been shaken thoroughly out of any idle dreams of self-conceit. Elizabeth Fry was in earnest, and seeing in the foul prison-house those of her own sex, some of whose souls had once been white as hers, unhelped and perishing, she turned from self to God, and was thus saved from the pit-fall where so much love and strength that might have been used for others is buried.

At the time Elizabeth Fry did not dream that she was the appointed saviour. She did what she was able in giving clothes and gentle words, but then could do no

more, and soon after returned to Plashet.

Not however the same, the vision of hopeless wretchedness was ever before her, awakening not sentimental emotion but a wish to alleviate the sufferings of those living palpitating lives whom none pitied.

The ensuing months at Plashet were quiet and happy. Mrs. Fry rejoiced to be once more at home and was welcomed on all sides.

Two little extracts from her diary are so beautiful, and shew so much of her character that they are copied here.

“I awoke under the feeling, as I often do, like one athirst, and it came across me like a gleam, that what I could not do the Redeemer would do for me, even grant the willing mind to submit in all things; this gave me hope. Words of doctrine I do not pretend to understand or enter into, one thing I know that Christ in me, or that ever-blessed Power I have felt.....is my *only hope* of glory, my *only hope* of salvation. Through a great and wonderful mystery I do here heartily and fully acknowledge

that as far as I know a coming unto God it is through and by Christ, and I doubt not there are numbers who never knew, and never consequently acknowledge by whom they came unto God, who may experience a being reconciled without knowing by whom they are reconciled." The humble and broad-minded spirit of these lines is very characteristic of all we know of this woman after God's own heart for whom He had prepared so great a work.

The other extract shows that her reserve was not pride or selfishness:—"My original intention in writing this journal has been simply and purely the good of my own soul, but if after my death those who survive should believe that any part of it would conduce to strengthen and encourage others I am willing it should be exposed, even if my weaknesses are acknowledged, so long as they lead to the love of Him who has in tender mercy manifested Himself to be Strength in my Weakness, and a Present Help in every time of need."

1814 was a trying year in many respects to Mrs. Fry. A new baby was added to the family, and in the midst of depression, caused by a lengthened period of physical weakness, her brother John died. She was glad for him, his life had been very sad, and he had never recovered from the shock of his young wife's death six years before, but she could not help feeling his loss keenly, and death to her woman's nature seemed very terrible. Several other much loved friends also died in rapid succession.

Yet they were comparatively outside trials. In 1815 a sorrow came which struck home to her very heart.

After a week's sudden illness her little daughter Elizabeth died. This nestling had not stayed quite five years, but she had crept very close to the mother's heart, and it was with bitter pain she saw her plume her tiny wings and fly away.

She realized how weary a world the little thing had left, and rejoiced that her passionate

pleading that the child should be spared great or prolonged suffering, had been answered, yet she and her husband mourned her loss deeply, and the selfish human love would awake and cry sometimes. Though another little one was given the following April, the empty place was never filled to Mrs. Fry.

In the end of 1816, after a visit to Pakefield, she left her four elder children—two girls and two boys—in Norfolk. This was a trial to her, but she felt it was best for them.

Her letters to her elder children at this time are filled with tender counsel and replete with that intensity given by love somewhat repressed in its expression; as among all the Puritans, much show of affection being considered by Friends extravagant; but this very moderation was productive of that exquisite unspoken tenderness so frequently met with among the Scotch, and of a healthy and controlled tone of mind, in which love never degenerated into sentimental emotion so fatal to endurance and constancy.

At the same time she was writing them undemonstrative letters Mrs. Fry notes in her diary "What I feel for the children I cannot describe."

At the end of 1816 the Frys again went up to town for the winter.

The waiting time was over. Unmurmuringly had ordinary life, with its pettinesses been taken up, and the high gifts turned to common uses, but the reaping of the rich harvest from the apparently dead seed was at hand. All Elizabeth Fry's brain, and heart and experience, and patience, with utter self-abnegation, were needed in the battle with evil and indifference which, to the very end of her life, she had henceforth to fight in the sight of all the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAYBREAK IN PRISON.

The Man of Sorrows ;—and the Cross of Christ
Is more to us than all His miracles.

H. E. HAMILTON KING.

THE bells rang out in commemoration of the birth of the pitiful Christ, and children's voices sang joyfully of peace on earth. Peace ! In Europe indeed war had ended for the present, Napoleon had fallen, and in England the terror of invasion was over, but in the hearts of men there was little peace. By many a hearth they mourned their dead, and in many a wrecked homestead hatred and cruelty bred prolific from wrong and oppression. In the prison the merciless hand of those who bore Christ's name crushed the fallen into deeper depths, and drove many a broken heart to despair. Peace ! unheeded in the condemned cells, those who had touched, not the life but the pocket of their fellow men, watched with shuddering, life

still strong within them, the hour of their doom draw nigh, while little children nourished on evil went forth to a living death of sin and pain.

There were a few left who had pity on the children at least. Several members of the Society of Friends, including two brothers-in-law of Mrs. Fry, Mr. Hoare and Sir Fowel Buxton, had started a scheme for the reformation of child thieves.

But within the prison walls there was little change. In Newgate the separation between the men and women was rather more complete, and a double iron grating prevented too close intercourse with the swarms of visitors of the honest ranks who were allowed entrance.

At this Christmas time Elizabeth Fry once more entered the gates, determined to see if something could not be done, at any rate for the children.

Gaining admittance to the female ward she looked on what seemed more like a den of wild beasts than of women. The din, which had hushed for a moment when she entered,

rose clamorous around her, while the crowding and dirt made the air almost insupportable, yet in the midst of all she could see gleams of hope for them, in the tears that dropped over the dirty little baby clasped close to some fallen one's breast, or in the motherhood which caused one and another as she spoke to them to bewail these surroundings for their children, and in her heart a purpose grew and strengthened. If God would help her she would bring light to this dark place, woman as she was. Could she bear this close contact with misery so loathsome, with womanhood so degraded, with scenes so appalling?

Self with her had been second through long years in the little things of life, and now it was answer enough that these were her sisters and there was none other to save.

Soon she came again. "Leave me alone with them," she pleaded of the astonished turnkey who conducted her. Did Mrs. Fry know what she asked? Even he seldom went in alone. She gained her point, the door shut

to with a bang, and the key grated in the lock.

She afterwards confessed: "I felt a little alarmed at the thought that I was shut up with these poor creatures;" but none could have guessed it, looking at her calm face and disguised mien as she stood just within the door and faced the women. Dumb with surprise they gazed on their unwonted visitor, and waited in silence for her to speak.

Then they heard a story, old yet new for ever, how after years of wasted life when for many of them to live could be but a reaping of the corruption they had sown, God still waited to give them forgiveness even now at this late hour, and one who came to save sinners called even them, weary and laden with sin, to come to Him and rest.

"Who is this Jesus?" they asked, and weeping, "can we come, or is it too late." Gently she told them of a mercy that never says "too late" to a cry for pardon.

They barely understood, but that sweet

presence calmed them, and they felt somehow as if she cared.

Hardly could they believe it when Elizabeth Fry, in the same quiet voice, went on to propose a school for their children if they would co-operate with her. Did, then, this beautiful stately lady care what became of their children whom the world wanted not? And ask their help? Here was something very tangible, they could surely respond! With the tears rolling down their cheeks these women that an hour or so before had been fighting, drinking and gambling, looked into her face and promised to do what they could to help her save the children.

Next time she came a young woman named Mary Conner, of more respectable appearance than most and pretty well educated, was pointed out as willing to act as schoolmistress.

Where to teach the children was the next question; in the noisome and overcrowded common-room it was vain to attempt it.

Elizabeth Fry appealed to the governor, and

other officials of the prison. With wondering courtesy they placed a cell at her disposal in which to make what they considered a perfectly futile experiment.

Taking with her a young Friend, Mary Sanderson, Elizabeth Fry went to start the school in this novel schoolroom.

Knowing Mrs. Fry's natural timidity Mary Sanderson had not been prepared for the scene she was to witness, and was terrified as the door closed upon them. It was enough to make the boldest quail. Women half naked, and some partially drunk, struggled with one another for front place at the railing, shouting and begging eagerly the while. She clung to Elizabeth Fry, whose calm and unaffrighted demeanour reassured her, but as she afterwards described it, she never forgot the horror of going into what appeared to be a den of wild beasts, nor the shudder with which she heard the key turn in the lock.

That day they gathered as many as possible of the children, and prisoners under twenty-five,

into the cell allotted them, and installed Mary Conner as schoolmistress.

Many of the older women entreated to be allowed in, but these they had reluctantly to refuse, there being no more room.

Weeks passed, and almost daily Mrs Fry went to the prison school, gradually inducing some other friends to accompany her.

She would however take none of her younger acquaintances, not considering it well that they should witness scenes, which, as she afterwards said, were too bad to be described.

Mrs. Fry also visited several women condemned to death, some for murder. This was a terrible strain on her nerves, and after calming and helping the poor distracted creatures, she would return home utterly spent and dreadfully distressed.

She had now to face the consequences of what she was doing. She purposed firmly to attempt the reformation of the women themselves, though almost all but herself deemed the plan of introducing order and employment into

Newgate as wild and visionary. With her clear judgment she saw that this would carry her far beyond the bounds of ordinary conventionality.

The school was becoming known, and her action in going to the officials severely criticised. It was at that time a far more extraordinary thing for a lady to do than it would be now, and Elizabeth Fry shrank from appearing extraordinary. For years, however, she had trained herself to act, not as she liked, but as she thought right, and when confronted practically with the question whether her own reputation or the salvation of these poor creatures should come first, she put aside her own claims without hesitation, though not without pain. She naturally liked to be thought well of, and the condemnation of those she loved stung her to the quick.

But a brave and knightly heart beat beneath her woman's kerchief, and having undertaken the deliverance of the helpless, her chivalry would not let her shrink or turn back because of possible pain to herself.

She had to rely entirely on her own calm judgment and strength of purpose. All the officials, and most of her friends, told her that to introduce materials for work among the prisoners would be only putting temptation in their way, without achieving any good—that though the women appeared so earnest now in their entreaties for instruction, they were incapable of any sort of lasting reformation, several members of the corporation and others having made vain attempts at improving their condition.

Nothing daunted, however, Mrs. Fry held to her firm belief that prison life might be totally changed, and a new state of things introduced in which reformation should not only become possible but probable.

Her idea was that the prisoners should be classified, as far as possible, instructed and kept fully employed, that little or no communication should be allowed with their friends, and that suitable and sufficient food and clothing should be supplied by the prison authorities.

Few of these reforms could be immediately

commenced. Mrs. Fry's hands were soon so full with the school alone that she could hardly keep pace with her work. She dreaded, too, that in going beyond the prescribed limits of a woman's sphere of action she should neglect her old duties to home, husband and children. Still amid all the bustle she felt a real calm and peace. It was such joy to see those women, whom all but she had deemed irreclaimable, crowd up to her as she entered, to beg, not for money or for spirits, but for teaching. No one can tell what she was to them, sunshine, life, hope,—or what a change her beautiful presence was from that of the heartless gaolers.

In April 1817, Elizabeth Fry, with several other ladies definitely formed themselves into a band which they called 'An Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners of Newgate.'

In these days of associations for any and every purpose this does not seem much, in the face, however, of this crying need, these women knew that they must band together, shoulder to

shoulder, and hand in hand to do *real* battle, and many a hard won victory had that little association to shew in after years. They took up their position where others had failed, with courageous hearts, for they believed that the battle was not theirs but the Lord's, who had heard the crying of the prisoners though they had not cried to Him.

As soon as it was formed the association laid its plans before the sheriffs and city magistrates. These were kind enough, but inclined to view the whole thing as a visionary and soft-hearted feminine scheme which would soon die a natural death. Though not sanguine that the prisoners would submit to any kind of discipline they consented to meet the ladies one Sunday at Newgate.

The April sunlight streamed through the barred window that Sabbath afternoon on a strangely unwonted scene within those dreary walls. On the one hand stood a little group of ladies, conspicuous among them their moving spirit—Elizabeth Fry. On the other a group of

city men, their practical faces wearing an expression of interest and curiosity, before them were gathered the women prisoners, dissolute and sunken, yet with a gleam very like human love in their eyes as they turned them on the tall figure that stepped forward to address them.

A pin fall could have been heard as in her musical voice, peculiarly rich in its intonations, Elizabeth Fry told them of the great desire she and her friends had to help them, and asked if they were willing to do work if provided, and to accept and abide by rules. They would attempt nothing, she said, without this consent, but if they really wished, would enable them to rise from their present degraded position to something better and higher. With one accord the women declared eagerly that they would do anything she wished.

She then read out several rules establishing a system of monitors over classes of 12, under the superintendence of a matron; and several more with regard to personal cleanliness and decency.

As each rule was read out Mrs. Fry asked those who assented to raise their right hands. Every rule was thus carried unanimously by the prisoners, and in the same way monitors from amongst themselves were chosen and accepted.

When Mrs. Fry ceased, one of the sheriffs spoke for the rest, saying that the scheme had their full approbation, and they hoped it would succeed,—then turning to Mrs. Fry, and waiving towards the prisoners “You see your materials.”

She did see and understand them as he did not: to him they were only degraded criminals, to her they were fallen sisters to be patiently won back to right and happiness. From among these crude materials many a patient and purified life came forth bearing, it might be, the consequences of sin for the rest of time, yet no longer in utter despair, but with humble and trustful hope. If she did not give them up surely He who knew their weakness and their temptations still better, would not, and dimly understanding this they ‘touched God’s right hand in the

darkness, and were lifted up and strengthened.'

An old laundry was given to the association to use as a work room. A bright idea occurred to one of the members that all the clothing sent out to the convict settlements abroad should be made by the female prisoners in Newgate, instead of being done by city workers. The firm which had hitherto undertaken the supply rendered it easy by their ready acquiescence of the plain.

For a month the experiment was tried secretly, and at the end of even that short time such a change had been wrought that it was decided to ask the Corporation of London to make it a part of their prison system.

The Lord Mayor and several members of the Corporation came to see the state of affairs for themselves.

Their astonishment at the alterations was unbounded. Quietly and decently the women appeared before them and showed their work, on many of their faces the hang dog look having changed to one of human interest and intelligence.

As they looked they marvelled if this transformation could really be the outcome of one true and courageous woman's pitiful thought, but their wonderment ceased when they saw Elizabeth Fry and perceived the influence she exercised over the prisoners, entirely gentle, yet commanding respect instinctively, being possessed of a mind at once vigourous and original, so that she could lead the tender impulses and sympathies of less rare women into practical channels. Many a timid lady who might have spent all her life weeping over these lost ones without doing them a particle of good, under her strong yet half unconscious guidance and support, was helping forward their reformation materially.

The plan was immediately adopted by the authorities as part of the prison regulations, the association was empowered to punish those who infringed their rules with short periods of solitary confinement, and were allowed a grant towards the expense of a matron.

To the Committee of Aldermen appointed

to look into gaol management, Mrs. Fry represented the over-crowded state of the prison, and the absence of women to attend to the female prisoners. The pernicious result of allowing indiscriminate admittance of outsiders, and the abuses arising from the dependence of the prisoners on these for food and clothing. She also urged that all should be given work as part of their punishment.

For the present the Corporation would not undertake to bear the expense of these alterations, but consented to make them if the money were supplied. A fund for this purpose was forthwith opened, and many, particularly Mrs. Fry's own brothers, nobly responded to the appeal of the association.

The change taking place in Newgate was brought forward in the papers in the autumn of this year. The management of prisons was becoming a question of pressing social importance, and the whole country was roused by the report. To her dismay Elizabeth Fry found herself famous.

With this publicity her quiet home life ceased. Letters poured in from all parts of the country with requests for advice, or enquiries about the work at Newgate. The placid years of order and exactitude in irksome household details now bore their fruit in enabling her to grapple with business from which an inexperienced woman would have shrunk dismayed. All the powers of her mind were brought into requisition, and all her culture and education needed.

Beside this she had frequently to be the guide to the many in high positions who wished to see her system at work in Newgate.

With all her practical mastery of business detail her heart never hardened towards the prisoners as mere "cases." Amidst work daily growing more arduous she continued her personal and loving influence with them. The manner in which gaming was banished the Common Room is illustrative.

The matron reported one day to Elizabeth Fry that some of the women had been found

gambling with cards. She called them all before her and told them gently that she much objected to gambling, believing it did them real harm, she asked them, therefore, as a personal favour, that those who possessed cards should bring them to her. As this would betray them she had hardly any expectation that they would do so, although she hoped card playing would cease. As she sat with the matron afterwards a tap came at the door and one of the prisoners entered, who with tears in her eyes placed a packet of cards in Mrs. Fry's hand. Another and another followed till five packs had been delivered up without compulsion, other than that of love, by these women who had scarcely been considered human a few months before.

Mrs. Fry believed in rewards as a stimulus to these poor creatures, she knew that it was not every one even amongst the uncorrupt who can feel a good action enough reward in itself, although these often expect children and others under their control to feel this truly Ciceronic sentiment.

Accordingly, for these five packs of cards she brought some little gifts of clothing, when to her astonishment one of the worst characters, who had behaved so disgracefully during her trial that she had been considered irremediable, pleaded for a Bible instead, which request was of course willingly granted.

The way in which the Bible was received in the prison was wonderful.

Had a minister of any description entered there and attempted to preach he would probably have been received with derisive jeers and blasphemings.

Although she knew this Mrs. Fry determined to try the experiment of simply reading the Bible, without further comment than was needed to make it plain to their ignorant minds.

As she told the Committee of the House of Commons, later, "she never tried to uphold any particular doctrine, but read simply."

To her amazement the prisoners listened with devouring attention. A gentleman who attended one of these readings said that "where

he had expected mocking smiles he beheld earnest and tear-stained faces." When Mrs. Fry announced her intention of reading to them they would flock up the stairs after her with the greatest eagerness.

Early in 1818 Mrs. Fry was called up for examination before a Committee of the House of Commons. In giving evidence she did not hesitate to denounce the disgraceful state of affairs she had found in Newgate, nor to suggest necessary alterations and improvements. This evidence, too long and tedious to give here, may be found in full in the large memoirs of Elizabeth Fry, and the small one published in the Eminent Women Series.

She again urged the regular employment of the female prisoners and their committal entirely into the hands of women officers, venturing to state that in a building which the ladies of the association might visit as inspectors, where no communication was allowed with the outside populace, room given to classify them and employment provided, a thousand of the most

unruly women could be reduced to order in a week.

The Committee was much pleased with her report, but it is not surprising that they ascribed more of the good effected to her personal influence than to the perfection of the system on which she worked.

Not long after this encouragement Elizabeth Fry came into serious collision with the Government. Since she had begun her visits to Newgate she had made it a general rule not to interfere with the working of the law of Capital Punishment, cruel and unjust though it was. This was indeed her only wise course; had she made sentimental appeals on behalf of every woman who was put to death, and pestered the Government with frantic pleadings for reprieves, as many a soft-hearted woman with less wisdom might have done, the Authorities would probably have closed the doors of Newgate to her and thè association. As it was, although feeling strongly on the subject and expressing her opinion fearlessly, she had

until this time preserved a neutral position towards the Authorities in every case.

The laws were verily pitiless. If merciful juries had not readily caught at some very extenuating circumstances, and had there not been technical means of evading the law, it is computed that four executions *per diem* would have taken place in the United Kingdom. Almost every variety of robbery, fraud or forgery was punishable by death, while the last was a crime made peculiarly easy to commit by the circulation of small bank notes. The Bank Solicitors, however, had the privilege of arranging with those forgers, whom they wished not to die, that they should plead guilty, as it was called, to the minor count, by which they were saved from the death penalty. It was a forgery case which so moved Mrs. Fry that she was induced to depart from her usual course.

A young woman, Harriet Skelton, was condemned to death for passing forged bank notes. She was no common criminal, and had done

this for her lover to whom she was devoted, and there were other circumstances of extenuation, though none to touch the law. She had been given the offer of pleading guilty to the minor count, but relying on the evidence against her breaking down, she had declined it. Her demeanour was so different from that of the usual class of prisoners that no one had anticipated the decision of the court would have been her condemnation, which fell like a thunderbolt on all. The many outsiders who came to see Harriet Skelton entreated Elizabeth Fry to intercede for her, and she was prevailed upon to make the attempt. She went to the Duke of Gloucester, among others, who having been to see Skelton himself, was so stirred that he appealed to Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, and accompanied Mrs. Fry to the bank directors. All, however, was unavailing, the poor girl was executed. Indirectly through this case Mrs. Fry brought about much public excitement on the subject of capital punishment, a question over which the Government was

getting into much difficulty. Lord Sidmouth was greatly annoyed by her action, and even accused her of exaggeration and prevarication in her statements. Mrs. Fry's answer was gently but firmly to decline to hold further intercourse with Lord Sidmouth till he had withdrawn his insinuations. This he refused to do, and though Mrs. Fry, accompanied by Lady Harcourt, sought a reconciliation by a personal interview, the attempt proved futile, and for one error of judgment she had to pay the penalty of a complete breach with the Home Secretary.

This affair grieved her bitterly, not so much on account of herself as for fear that her words which had been so misconstrued, should have done harm.

It was curious that the very same day on which she paid this ill-starred visit her heart was cheered by a very different scene. Queen Charlotte had sent for Mrs. Fry to meet her at the Mansion House that afternoon. Instead of being taken to the drawing-room where they were to have met the Queen, she and

Lady Harcourt were shewn on to the platform in the Egyptian Hall, in which hundreds of children were assembled to be examined before a crowd of onlookers.

On the platform were representatives of some of the noblest homes in England, and the highest ecclesiastical dignities. Standing amongst these the Queen, soon after her entrance, descried Mrs. Fry's tall figure; her business with the children ended, she stepped up to her. The eyes of the crowd followed Queen Charlotte, and when they saw to whom she was speaking a murmur of applause ran through the great assembly, ending, despite the presence of Royalty, in a universal clap and cheer which was taken up by those outside. It was truly a sight worth the seeing. Elizabeth Fry in her simple dress standing among the bishops, her sweet and dignified face flushed with the unwonted excitement, while the Queen of the greatest kingdom in the world publicly showed her respect and attention. Not one heart in all

that crowd grudged her the honour—was she not the champion for the right of every fallen human being to a fair chance of recovery, and the defender of helpless little ones from a fate worse than death?

Mrs. Fry had taken the breach with Lord Sidmouth too much to heart to feel any great pleasure on this occasion. She wrote to Lady Harcourt that she had pleaded this man's cause both in public and private with those who set him down as merciless and cruel. She could not rest, she says, if she had pained her menial servant, and feeling that she had lost a friend in Lord Sidmouth she grieved day and night over the misunderstanding.

CHAPTER IX

DAYBREAK ON BOARD.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

WHITTIER.

ALTHOUGH the women's side of Newgate had undergone transformation, the association soon found that they had only touched the outer rim of a system that required thorough reformation, if lasting good was to be effected. To give more than temporary relief they would have to grapple not only with the difficulties of Newgate, but with the general principles of the Prison and Transportation system.

As Mrs. Fry subsequently learned in correspondence with Mr. Marsden, Chaplain at the penal settlement of Parmentta, New South Wales, nothing could be more disastrous than

the manner in which transportation was then carried out.

No barracks of any kind were provided for the female convicts, they were turned on to the Colony to shift for themselves as best they could.

Many of the women living the worst of lives out there would have been glad to have kept straight, but with many of them it had been the hard choice between starvation and vice.

The very food doled out to them weekly had often to be given in payment for a roof over their heads. This state of things existed, it must be remembered, in a place where men with good characters were the exception, almost every convict sent out being contaminated by intercourse with the most abandoned men.

The attention of the association was particularly drawn to this subject of transportation early in 1818, when the time came for the women they had instructed to be sent out.

The ladies were told that the day on which

the women for transportation were removed from Newgate was usually one of unbridled riot. Before leaving, the women would destroy all they could, and as they were conveyed in open waggons to the waterside, disgraceful scenes took place in the streets.

Mrs. Fry, however, determined that this time there should be a difference. At her request the governor gave leave for the prisoners to be removed in closed conveyances, and she promised them that if they would behave decently she and the other ladies of the association would go with them to Deptford, where the convict ship 'Maria' awaited them. The result was an entire change; quietly, in order, the women filed into hackney carriages, and were conveyed without publicity to Deptford.

On board Mrs. Fry found the arrangements worse than she had anticipated. Below deck women and children were herded like cattle, some being heavily and cruelly ironed, and there they were to remain during all the weeks of the voyage, without employment or superinten-

dence. On their arrival at the penal settlement they would be turned out penniless and homeless in a foreign land.'

Mrs. Fry saw that all the good done to these women would be worse than undone by the long idle voyage and the hopeless landing.

Hastily glancing over the arrangements made, Mrs. Fry found that the prisoners were to be divided into messes of six. This gave a basis for classification, and she suggested an arrangement into classes of twelve, with a monitor over each class.

The proposal was at once accepted, and the women were immediately grouped in this manner, and as far as possible those of like ages and crimes were placed together.

It seemed hopeless to find work for them or to get it done without supervision. The association, however, heard that patchwork and knitting found a ready sale in the colony. The Manchester manufacturers were appealed to, and in the course of a few days enough pieces of coloured print had been supplied to give all

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the women ample employment. This work was to be sold by the women for their own benefit, so that those who were industrious could gain enough to keep them from starvation on their arrival, until they could obtain respectable employment.

Nor were the children neglected. A space was found where they could be taught, and a schoolmistress from among the convicts appointed to teach them reading, knitting, and sewing, who was to have a reward if she fulfilled her duties.

The result of this first experiment was never definitely known, as the captain died on the way out, and the only other responsible man, the surgeon general, did not care how the prisoners behaved; but afterwards the Newgate women became noted for their order and industry on the convict ships.

On the day the 'Maria' took her departure there was an unusual scene on her decks. In the surrounding ships the crews who had watched with some curiosity the daily visits of the ladies

to the 'Maria,' seeing the women brought on deck, crowded to the sides of their vessels to see what was going on.

By the cabin door, on the 'Maria,' stood a group of ladies, the taller of whom, dressed as a Quakeress, stepped forward, and amid dead silence read a few words from the Bible in a clear and audible voice. After a moment's pause she knelt on the deck and prayed for those for whom she could do no more, that God might help and guard them, and keep alive in their hearts the good sown. When she rose there was no sound but the low passionate weeping of some of the women and wail of their babies, and the very sailors standing by seemed touched.

As Mrs. Fry left the ship the women pressed to the side of the vessel for one last look at the sister-woman who had loved even them, and followed her with blessings till she was out of sight and hearing.

In bidding farewell to these whom she had tried to lift from their hopelessness, whom

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she was now obliged to leave again to the mercies of the cruel world, Elizabeth Fry felt, as most of those who would save others feel, utterly helpless.

We stretch our hands for a moment to those struggling in the dark sea, and then have to leave them on the slippery rocks with the cry in our hearts:

“Is this like love to stand

With no help in my hand,

When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?”

And we are only saved from utter discouragement and despair for others when our prayer “May God love them” is changed into the conviction “God does love them,” and we realize that that Love is more enduring, and that Hand more strong than we can conceive.

Thus to God Elizabeth Fry left those she could no longer succour, and, as she will know some day, not in vain.

From the time of her first visit, until her death, Mrs. Fry saw every convict ship off that left England, except one.

Through rain and wind and cold she would go, often accompanied by her friend and helper, Elizabeth Pryor. She never let personal interest interfere with this last kindness she could show to these forlorn women.

Some years later, on the day she had to go, one of her little ones was seriously ill. "How can I leave my baby?" rose the cry strong in the mother's heart; but resolutely she turned from the little cot, knowing that while other skillful hands would minister to the child she left, there was none but she to soften the bitterness of exile to the poor convicts.

Another time she and Mrs. Pryor were in danger of drowning. The open boat in which they were returning up the Thames was caught in a sudden squall, and the rowers could make no headway against wind and tide. In vain they hailed several steamers, and were at last picked up through the chivalry of a Captain to whom they had not signalled, who noticed their plight. The Captain, who had stopped his vessel in an exciting race, to help them, felt

more than rewarded by his subsequent friendship with Mrs. Fry.

This rough and ready though honest gentleman, who had, as he afterwards confessed, "some little dislike to sects" was charmed out of all prejudice by Elizabeth Fry's winning ways, and from him we hear the impression she made on strangers. Who could resist this beautiful, persuasive, and heavenly-minded woman? He wrote: "To see her was to love her." As he watched her that day moving quietly about the deck speaking a word here and there to his men, or giving them a leaflet, he felt sure to his surprise that here was not cant but reality.

It was on a convict ship, that, in 1826, Elizabeth Fry met William Wilberforce. No one could see and hear these two Deliverers, satisfied as were both with no empty words of well-expressed sympathy with their suffering brothers and sisters, but who had braved toil and pain, and misunderstanding for the sake of those the world reckoned worthless, without feeling that

God had not left Himself without a witness. The daughter of an admiral who went with her father on this occasion, wrote: "No lapse of time could ever efface the impression of the 107th Psalm as read by Mrs. Fry, with such extraordinary emphasis that it seemed to make the simple reading a commentary, and as she passed on from passage to passage it struck my mind as if the whole series of illusions had been written in view of such a scene as was before us."

Eventually the association gained many improvements in their convict ships, among which was a matron officially appointed. The first was the wife of a missionary returning with her husband, who undertook the post in 1834.

A building was also provided where the women were properly received and looked after, which not only saved the individuals, but greatly improved the moral state of the colony.

To go back to Newgate. During 1818, Mrs. Fry's readings to the prisoners became

quite a public affair, attended by Members of Parliament and others in the highest positions. This was a great trial to her, but after a pause for their entrance, she never allowed the presence of even the most distinguished visitors to make the slightest difference in her address. She was not speaking to the rich and the great, but to the poor and miserable, to those who had experienced temptations and agonies those outsiders could not even understand, before which the bravest heart among them would have shrunk appalled, yet endured, as Mrs. Fry well knew, by weak and suffering women, some hardly more than children, and to them her pure heart, while filled with loathing to their sin, went out in sympathy strong to help them to overcome.

Many of these visitors who came out of curiosity went away quite broken down. One, a member of the Upper House, called it the deepest tragedy he had ever witnessed.

In 1822, John Randolph, American Envoy to England, declared that in attending one of

these Bible Readings he had seen the greatest curiosity in England, before which Westminster Abbey, the Tower, Somerset House, the British Museum, and Parliament itself sank into utter insignificance ; so greatly was he struck with what appeared to him to be the miraculous effect of Mrs. Fry's influence on the most depraved women.

Few indeed of such listeners had heard the Bible held out thus as healing medicine to perishing souls by one who could ignore all the world and not be turned from her purpose to charm the great in her audience.

But while she spoke for the prisoners it was not their need alone which was met, but that also of many beside who heard her.

Human hearts are wondrously alike, whether they beat beneath silk or fustian, and that which really reaches one will often come home to another in very different circumstances outwardly.

In 1831 Mrs. Fry went to visit a young Jew who was dying, and who had sent begging

her to come to him. She found him to be one whom she had long observed attending their Newgate readings. She had missed him lately, and supposed that like many others, the excitement and novelty having passed, he had tired of coming, but now discovered his absence was owing to illness. He told her his visits to Newgate had been far more to him than any Church, and handing her his Bible which lay by his side, asked her to read again to him the 107th Psalm. Soon after she heard that he had died in peace.

Many and many a case such as this there must have been, unknown to her, and some day knowing she will rejoice that she was faithful to her trust.

If Elizabeth Fry had not been true to the core she must have been spoilt by all this adulation and publicity; but in her absorbing devotion to the end of saving these women she had literally no time to notice the attention she attracted; nor when much of the excitement subsided, and visitors became less frequent, was

she discouraged ; unheeding the world's praise or censure she went straight on with her work.

The association slowly but surely changed the whole aspect of affairs in Newgate. Communication with outsiders was gradually restricted, necessities were sold within the prison gates while arrangements were made to give the prisoners the benefit of some of their earnings instead of their receiving money supplies from without.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIGHT SPREADS.

“ If sympathy were mere feeling, it would be deadened by the constant contemplation of sorrow, but involving as it does an exertion of the will, so becoming an action, it is intensified by every effort made for its cultivation.”

E. M. SEWELL.

AT the latter part of 1818 Mrs. Fry visited Scotland and the North of England with her brother, Joseph John Gurney, chiefly to visit Friends as a minister, but also to look into the state of prisons.

With a thrill of sympathy we see in her private journal that Elizabeth Fry still kept the woman's clinging nature. Outwardly calm, business-like and dignified ; receiving governors, and deputations of magistrates as gently as it were all in the day's work of a woman's life ; and at the same time writing in her diary how timid she felt in public meetings, and how lonely

at being so many hundreds of miles from husband and children.

They found Durham old gaol, and the prisons of Haddington, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Carlisle, as well as at smaller places, in the worst possible condition.

In the Scotch prisons almost all the prisoners were chained down and left with little or no supervision, in dirt and neglect indescribable. Even the untried had to bear these miseries, and, still worse, poor lunatics were confined in similar cells frequently till they died. In those days there were few separate asylums for the insane, and something of the old idea of possession caused them to be treated with wanton cruelty, born of fear.

The treatment there received grieved Elizabeth Fry's tender womanly heart most deeply.

That those upon whom had fallen what she termed "the worst of evils except sin" should be treated with peculiar cruelty instead of peculiar tenderness, roused her burning indignation, and to the end of her life

she never ceased to plead their cause.

Mr. Gurney afterwards published Notes on their tour which attracted much attention. Many hitherto unknown abuses were brought to light, and though several attempts were made to contradict the facts he adduced they broke down, and a flood of light streamed in on the dark practices in the prisons.

Not long after this Mrs. Fry's health failed entirely for a time. Beside her public cares she had deep personal sorrows which seemed to drain all her strength. As soon as possible, however, she returned to London and resumed her toil.

Her interest in prisoners and the state of prisons was no 'Borioboolaga,' taken up to the exclusion of sympathy with every other class.

She had real care for suffering of every kind, and any need was all sufficient to claim her large-hearted sympathy.

The winter of 1819-20 was a terrible time for the poor, especially for the homeless. Mrs. Fry heard a piteous tale of a little lad

frozen to death on one of the most bitter nights, and could not rest till a shelter had been provided where the homeless might have warm food and shelter, and be found employment. It is curious to see one of the "Darkest England" institutions forestalled by more than half a century by the pitiful thought of one kind heart. Nor did her own children lack that entire sympathy and comprehension in all the details of their lives which children of women engaged in public work are apt to miss. We find her returning from a reading at Newgate, or an interview with distinguished people, to help her little ones with a collection of shells, or write bright motherly letters to her boys at school.

In 1820-21 she went to nurse sick relations. She had considerable skill in nursing, arising more from loving perception and tact than from any special aptitude, and was in great request in times of sickness. She never lost this womanly tenderness which is so difficult to retain in the battle of life, the loss of which men so much



dread for the women who come out before the world. Among others she helped to nurse a sister's four little ones, who all died within five weeks, and her sister Priscilla, whose death in 1821 made the first break in this sister-band of seven.

Towards the end of 1820 Mrs. Fry went a prolonged tour with her husband and two of her daughters for the express purpose of inspecting the principal prisons in England.

In every place she insisted on going over the gaol herself and questioning all the officials most minutely. Her object was not only to gain information for future use, but to do something practical as far as possible in every place she visited.

With unfailing tact and discretion she induced women of influence in almost every place to form a Committee of Visiting Ladies, and overcome prejudices and indifference among the authorities. At each town she would leave a letter for those who had the management of the prisons, pointing out the capabilities for

improvement, and making suggestions as to what should be done.

About the same time she began a correspondence with Walter Venning (continued on after his death by his brother John Venning) on the subject of Prisons and Lunatic Asylums in Russia. In that country several ladies having heard of Mrs. Fry's work had united under Princess Sophia Metchersky to form a committee for visiting the female prisoners, and they looked to her for instruction. Under her advice vast improvements were made in the Government Lunatic Asylums. It was removed to a healthy and beautifully situated Palace, and made as home-like as possible, whereas before it had been a mere prison.

Mrs. Fry wrote entreating that the inmates might be given the Bible ; this letter was sent to the Emperor who forthwith gave orders for the Bible, in all languages, to be supplied. This was considered by some a very dangerous proceeding, but the result proved to be most satisfactory. Many hours were passed by the

lunatics reading to themselves or gathered in groups, and the pages of the Bible were often wet with tears.

During 1821 the Prince and Princess Royal of Denmark came to England, and among other people of note sought an interview with Elizabeth Fry. The Princess afterwards breakfasted with Mrs. Fry at Plashet, and quite an intimacy sprang up between them, many improvements in the Danish prisons resulting therefrom. Those in high positions felt her dignified courtesy a delightful change after the servility with which they are frequently surrounded.

Her letters to such are charmingly simple. She says just what she means and feels, making no difference in her honest truthfulness on account of their rank.

In this year, too, she was cheered by the great interest shown in Sir James Macintosh's bill for mitigating Capital Punishment, and although it was not passed the fact of its being so nearly victorious was evidence that

the public conscience was being aroused.

Near the end of 1822 Mrs. Fry's last child and first grandchild were born within a few hours of each other.

CHAPTER XI.

PAIN THAT WAS WORTH THE WHILE.

Measure thy life by love instead of gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth :
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice ;
And who so suffers most hath most to give.

H. E. HAMILTON KING.

THE months passed quickly, marked only by the increasing work they brought to Elizabeth Fry.

Now it was letters of importance came concerning the management of prisons, or deputation of magistrates or ecclesiastics wished to visit Newgate under her guidance; again the new baby claimed her special time and attention, or there was some sorrowful heart to be cheered and strengthened. Not only those whom the world calls unfortunate were lifted up by her, she had absolutely no opinion of the world's judgment, and understood the hopelessness and unrest that underlies many lives that look prosperous and bright, knowing that life-

weariness is not healed by the glitter of jewels.

Many among those of high rank to whom she was introduced turned instinctively to her for sympathy and help, and always found it.

The 'Ladies' Association' grew into the larger 'Ladies' British Association,' which undertook as far as possible the reclaiming of individuals. They tried to look after the women who were discharged from prison. Caroline Neave, an earnest and energetic member of the association, gave both time and money, and by her means a home was started in Westminster, at the end of 1822, for discharged prisoners. Here many of the most destitute were received direct from gaol.

Elizabeth Fry was greatly puzzled how to help the very young girls who were in prison for petty offences, and those, too, for whom it was obviously impossible to keep straight in their own homes. One day, as she watched some children in Newgate yard about to be discharged, the idea occurred to her of a home where such could be received; before a

year had passed such a home had actually been opened at Chelsea.

Her thought was always fruitful of action. She *did*, not *dreamed* "noble things." Few constitutions, however, could bear the continuous strain Mrs. Fry was putting on hers at this time. Beside all her business, she made the peculiar sorrows and difficulties of those around her so much her own as to be at times quite overwhelmed with them.

At the beginning of 1824 her health, which for months had been failing, completely broke down, and she had unwillingly to leave London for a rest at Brighton. Weary weeks of prostration followed. The eager spirit grieved more than those around her could guess. Writing with regard to this time she said "I question whether in my life comfort and hope were more, if so much, extinct in my heart."

Under the calm Quakerly exterior Elizabeth Fry's ardent life beat as warm and fresh as did ever that of Elizabeth Gurney, the restless impetuous girl! But through these long years

she had learned to trust "that, somehow, good should be the final end of ill." Not fruitlessly, for ever from the ashes of *her* hopes, of *her* joys, sprang up hope and abiding joy for others; and therein was Elizabeth Fry content.

If we could call her back to earth, and look into her true eyes as we asked "Would you have had one sorrow less?" we should surely see in them the light of entire satisfaction, as the answer came clear and strong: "By all the lessons of trust learned, by the knowledge of God gained in the darkness; by the many tried and fainting hearts helped as they alone could have been, through my own weariness and faintness; by all the unexpected opportunities coming from my pain, a thousand times No."

And we, too, should learn perchance that we, likewise, shall be satisfied when we see of the travail of our souls, and that we can only comfort others with the comfort of God when we have ourselves received His comfort in our sore need and pain, real and scathing.

Hundreds have had cause to rejoice in that visit of Mrs. Fry to Brighton.

Noting the many beggars which infested the streets, and called at the houses, Mrs. Fry bethought her of a talk she once had with Dr. Chambers on this very subject. The outcome was the establishment of a District Visiting Society, which instituted a combination of giving indiscriminately with a sort of Provident Club. It was not till after sundry delays that it was fairly started, its first Annual Report being published in 1835.

Daily, through the window, thrown open at night or early morning to admit the fresh air in her attacks of fainting, Mrs. Fry noticed the figure of a coastguardsman pacing the shingly beach. It is a curious psychological study to notice the varying effect the same object has on different minds. To some, that lonely figure pacing to and fro on his dangerous and thankless service, as in those days it was, might have suggested philosophical or artistic thoughts, but in the feeling heart of Mrs. Fry the

sight awoke sympathy and deep interest.

How desolate his life must be! She stopped one day when driving out and spoke to him. Learning this was against regulations and fearing the man might get into trouble she left with him her card to give to the officer in charge of the station, and told him to explain that she had stopped to ask him particulars of the life of coastguardsmen.

A day or so after, the Naval Lieutenant came to answer her enquiries in person. From him she heard what a dangerous life many of these brave men had to lead, and how cut off they were from human intercourse both by the nature of the service, and the regulations.

She longed to do something for them, and it occurred to her that it would bring some colour into their lives if they were supplied with Bibles and interesting literature. She took steps at once to provide the stations near Brighton with books, and obtained a grant of Bibles for them from the Bible Society. The men were delighted with her kind thoughtfulness

for them, and were most grateful for the books. The warmth with which they were received showed the need for something of this sort. Years after, Mrs. Fry was the means of getting libraries established by Government at all the Coastguard Stations, with a means of exchange between them.

In 1835 she visited all the stations along the South Coast, and was eagerly welcomed as a friend at each. Thus multiplied cheer for many a dreary life and dismal Coastguard Station resulted from Mrs. Fry's Brighton visit, although it was only after much opposition that she succeeded in getting the library system established, their practicability being doubted. Had she cared less she would have dropped the subject, but in spite of discouragement, she persevered and won her point.

During the summer of 1824, Mrs. Fry spent several very bright months with her family at Dagenham. She was the centre of all the enjoyment then, and no picnic or expedition was half complete without her.

The succeeding months at Plashet passed without much event, except the marriage of her eldest son in August, 1825, and Mrs. Fry's occasional visits to London, and other parts of the country.

It was somewhere about this time that she started a Servants' Society for the help of servants both in situations and out. She always took great interest in the well being of that class, and believed that by a little considerate kindness their lives might be made much happier.

The years 1825-26, were somewhat anxious times to the Frys, and many of their friends, owing to the commercial depression by which numbers of mercantile houses were entirely overthrown, while others were so shaken that they never recovered.

At the beginning of 1827 Mrs. Fry, with her namesake sister-in-law and her brother, Joseph John Gurney, went to Ireland to visit Friends and examine into the state of prisons and asylums. She felt leaving her home acutely,

especially as several of her children thought she should stay, forgetting that in giving her up willingly and cheerfully they would be helping on a world-wide work on which interests far beyond the circle of their little lives rested; this, although it grieved Mrs. Fry deeply could not hold her back.

Three months of exhausting and unremitting toil were spent, resulting in her being laid up at Waterford seriously ill for a week, from whence she returned home completely worn out. For the remainder of that year she was kept in as constant attendance on her sister Rachel, who was dying of decline, as her many engagements would allow. These two sisters had always been especial friends, and although Rachel Gurney did not hold the same views as Elizabeth Fry, they were wonderfully united in spirit; the death of this sister in September, 1827 was a great loss to her.

In the early part of 1828 another of her daughters was married and the future altogether looked fair and encouraging. But that year



which opened so brightly, closed — for this family—in darkness and storm.

A firm to which Joseph Fry was a partner, without, however, being actively concerned in its management, suddenly failed.

Mrs. Fry had watched this kind of trouble outside her own circle, now she had to endure it herself. Many turned eagerly to see how she would bear it, for it is one thing to sympathize with others and quite another to be oneself in the thick of whirl and worry, and meet calmly the petty vexations that take away any feeling of heroism. They were not disappointed, and learned that she trusted God in foul weather even as in fair. Nevertheless, pain borne bravely is still pain, and this was a bitter trial to her.

The Sunday after the failure the family were undecided as to whether to go to meeting or not, but Elizabeth Fry felt so sure it would right that they went with her.

The whole meeting was moved when they saw their beloved minister, who, undemonstrative



as she was as to her own feelings, had so often cheered and encouraged many among them, sit in her accustomed place, her head bowed and tears falling silently. Soon she recovered her self possession, and rising, told the meeting simply that it was God and not His gifts she sought, and He was just as much her refuge and help in this time of sorrow as in the old bright days. There were few dry eyes in the room as she resumed her seat.

A greater grief to Mrs. Fry than leaving the dear old home, or any of the other inevitable perplexities and humiliations which formed the disaster, was the estrangement of her husband and several of her children from the Society of Friends, owing to some of the regulations with regard to business failures.

Whatever comfort sympathy from outsiders can bring at such a time was Mrs. Fry's. Letters poured in, and many of these must have contained much cheer in their expression of hearty and genuine sorrow at her trouble.

The Frys moved for a time to Mildred's

Court, where their eldest son was living. Here there was much illness during the winter, and Mrs. Fry was in consequence kept much engaged, in addition to the circumstances of the failure, so that for a time the Prison work was deprived of her active superintendence.

Thus closed the year which brought so much that appeared only evil upon this noble woman, who of all people seemed to deserve happiness. Now that the story is finished, the picture painted, we can see the reason for the dark shadows,—how her sincerity was proved to all the world, and every occasion removed from those who would say it was lazy to be good and self-forgetting in prosperity, while she was thereby set free in a way she otherwise could not have been, to turn her attention to prisons on the continent.

CHAPTER XII.

MULTUM IN PARVO.

One who never turned his back but marched
breast-forward,
Never doubting clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
wrong would triumph,
Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep, to part.

ROBERT BROWNING.

SO the old life passed away, and the new began. In a little house in Upton lane, near to where her brother Samuel Gurney lived, Elizabeth Fry made home once again for her husband and children. The pinch here was such that they could no longer entertain the Friends who came up to London as they had been wont to do, which Mrs. Fry felt keenly.

She was soon drawn once more into the whirl of public work, being too unselfish to mope over her private sorrows, though she owned in her diary that it was a struggle to recommence visits to meetings, and other public work.

About this time she compiled a little book with a piece from the Bible for every day.

We can imagine she selected chiefly those parts which had helped her. This had an immense circulation: it was very simple and the days when text books became fashionable and superfluous had not dawned. There are many stories connected with it. Here is one. A little grandson of Mrs. Fry, to his great distress, lost the copy she had given him. Months after he heard of it again through the clergyman of a parish, some miles distant from his home. The child of a notorious poacher had picked it up and taken it to a wretched hut on the far edge of the common. There the mother was dying, hardened and miserable, shutting her door to all comers. To while away the slow hours she read the book her lad brought home. It proved life to her. She was utterly changed, and died in peace clasping her "precious book" in her wasted hand.

These tiny volumes were treasured by many

a poor convict in the dreary land of exile, and to many a dark place in England and abroad they found their way, as well as into the homes of the rich and great.

Meanwhile Mrs. Fry's foreign correspondence increased, for when her name came to be known on the continent applications for her advice were constant.

In 1831 Mrs. Fry was introduced to the Princess Victoria and her mother the Duchess of Kent. Nearly ten years later they met again, when the Queen, as the Princess had then become, took great interest in hearing of the successful prison work.

This year she was also presented to Queen Adelaide, at a Bazaar, the gaiety and brightness of which presented a strange contrast to the prison scenes, and especially to that on the convict ship where she had been the night before.

In 1831-1832 Mrs. Fry went several visiting tours in England, Ireland, and Wales. Accounts of these would be tedious, pen and paper cannot

bring back the cheer of those brief glimpses of one whose very presence made life seem worth living. She brought out the best in those she met, and always had a kindly construction to put on the actions and words of others, even when these were against herself. To her, sect and party were nothing, the spirit of real kindness and love everything, wherever found. Yet withal, her gentleness was the gentleness of strength, not weakness. She never soothed into indifference, but rather by her hopefulness for them who discouraged in the long fierce battle with self, strong to go on fighting harder, caught something of her own unwavering and daring reliance in a God Who *Cared*.

The world hungers for such men and women. As we look down history we see the common people are quick to recognise them, whether the great do or not. Buddah, Confucius, Jesus, (in so far as He was man), Francis de Sales, Katherine of Sienna, Wesley, or Elizabeth Fry, it matters not who they are, or in what age they live, the people *will* find out the Saviour-

spirit and flock to them. This was the case with Mrs. Fry,—wherever she went, ill or well, those in need of any kind turned to her like the Needle to the Pole. In Jersey, where she went in 1833 for her health, a meeting in a cottage was started on Sundays, but soon had to be moved to a larger place because of the numbers which crowded to meet her.

She visited Guernsey several times in subsequent years.

The work in England went steadily forward. In 1832 Mrs. Fry gave evidence again before a committee of the House of Commons, on Secondary Punishments. Both on this occasion and at other times she made it clear, as in her book of instructions and suggestions on Prison Management, for the associates, that she did not ask luxuries for prisoners, but demanded that prison life should be made the means of *reformation*, not of *degradation*; that every one who entered gaol might have a fair chance to begin life anew on release.

It goes almost without saying that Elizabeth

Fry was no more free from discouragements and misunderstandings than other saviours ; often she pressed bravely on in the face of difficulties seemingly insurmountable, to find, as those who honestly try it always do, that "Love conquereth all."

During one of her stays in Jersey, she thought of extending the coastguard libraries to the boats crossing between England and the Channel Islands. With the help of a Captain Clavell this was done on many of them.

In 1836. Elizabeth Fry first visited France, being called there by a serious accident which happened to her husband and two of her daughters in Normandy. It was just like her to visit the Prison and Hospital there, while scarcely recovered from the shock of the narrow escape of those so dear to her. This was but the beginning of visit after visit to different parts of the continent.

Her children, however, she always considered her first care. In 1836 we find a charming little circular-letter written to them, proposing

to have settled evenings for meeting together, and having unrestrained talk over the Bible or anything that might have interested them, and to exchange views and ideas.

She touchingly adds that she feels the loss of not having more help and encouragement from those whom she had brought up.

The proposed plan was adopted, and their meetings were continued for several years, even after the death of the mother who had been the central attraction in them. The whole family were thus brought and kept much nearer one another than they otherwise could have been, differing widely as they did in many ways.

In this letter and in other places we see how entirely Mrs. Fry recognized the responsibility of her children for themselves, and their right to opinions differing from her own. Her views on marriage too were very liberal and original for that time. She believed that parents exercised too much authority on the subject, and that there would be more truly happy matches if young people, having been carefully

trained to think and act for themselves, were left free to choose. She considered that marriage was often made too much of a business arrangement, love being in her opinion an absolute essential, and deeply regretted the rule then prevailing among Friends which disowned members who "married out" of the Society,

In 1838, Elizabeth Fry went to Paris with her husband and several Friends. They visited the St. Lazare Prison for women, and the La Force for men, also several other prisons, hospitals and schools. At the St. Lazare, where Mrs. Fry spoke to the women through an interpreter, not only were these deeply moved, but also the very turnkeys, who were present against her wish. They found the prisons much better managed than those in England, indeed some Mrs. Fry considered hardly sufficiently penal. This visit to Paris ended with an interview with the King and Queen, who were greatly interested in the arrangements made for a Ladies' Visiting Committee to the St. Lazare. Flying visits to a few more towns, and the little party returned to England.

The following year Mrs. Fry again visited France with her husband, also Switzerland.

During these tours crowds would gather around Elizabeth Fry and beg for the testaments and little text books she distributed in great quantities. She turned aside from her direct route to many a little village where she would visit peasants who were sick or in trouble. In one instance she was the means of restoring peace in a family where the father had turned his daughter Magdelina out of doors because of her Protestant views. At every town she was welcomed by 'pasteurs,' and listened to with respect by magistrates and inspectors of prisons, with whom she had many interviews.

We have a description by a student of a drawing-room meeting held for Mrs. Fry in Captain Trochin's home, near Geneva.

With most of the other students present he had expected a philosophical discourse on philanthropic or general topics, instead of which the personal half-unconscious needs of each were touched on with most delicate and intimate knowledge.

One is reminded of the day when Katherine of Sienna addressed a number of young monks and, her discourse ended, their Father confessor said she might have listened to their confessions, so exactly had she met the needs and difficulties of all. In every age those who know most of God seem to know really most of the hearts of their fellow men. So, breathlessly, did these young men listen to Elizabeth Fry, and felt to have had not a sermon, but a rare glimpse of God.

In 1840 Mrs. Fry, accompanied by her brother, Samuel Gurney, and others, went to Germany. They had an interview with the King in Brussels, and in the same place Elizabeth Fry addressed a large company assembled at one of the first houses to hear her. In Hanover and other places they found the prisons in a terrible condition, the prisoners being cruelly chained. As Mrs. Fry spoke to them great strong men broke down and sobbed like children. They had learnt to bear in stolid silence the cruelty of man, but at this touch of mercy they

had deemed extinct in heaven and earth they melted. This woman who had left home and country for their sake was to them a real messenger of God. At many places she spoke to crowded public meetings, on the condition of prisons and other institutions.

Finding that the Lutheran Church was still persecuted, Mrs. Fry felt she could not neglect the opportunity given her by access to Royalty, of pleading their cause. Through the Crown Prince, to whom she was introduced by the Princess William, she and her friends presented a letter to the King, who was so much touched by it that he remarked "the spirit of God must have helped them to express themselves as they did."

While in Germany, a day was spent at the Deconener Institute, Kaisersworth, then almost newly started. Here the thought first occurred to Mrs. Fry of establishing something of the same kind in England. It was owing to her wish, though she could not give much time or attention to the project personally, that a

Society of "Nursing Sisters" was started in this country.

The latter part of the tour was a great strain on her, and she was seriously ill for some time after her return to England. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, Mrs. Fry set off for the Hague, where she met the King and Queen of Holland, having letters of introduction from the Prince Consort.

At Amsterdam their party visited a Lunatic Asylum, which was in a fearful state, the inmates being treated more like animals than human beings. One poor woman, chained in a cell strewn with straw, attracted by the sweet face of her visitor, or by the unwonted tones of tender pity, crawled towards her as far as her fetters would allow, and seizing one of her hands, covered it with tears and kisses.

From Holland Mrs. Fry went to Denmark, where she was received in great state by the King and Queen. Before the King she pleaded the cause not only of the prisoners and lunatics, but of the slaves in the West Indies, and

the persecuted Christians in his own realm.

She spent some months in Germany before returning home. Having been there before, she had much to see to, and many people to meet, both to hear their reports on what had been accomplished since her first visit, and to give advice for future action. She was greatly cheered at finding several improvements. At Hamleyn the chains had been knocked off the prisoners by order of the Queen, and other ameliorations of their condition had been introduced.

She had many interviews with members of the Royal Family, who were really interested in her work, and afforded her every facility for inspecting prisons and asylums.

In October, 1841, she arrived in England too much exhausted to be taken home for several weeks. She never really recovered her health again.

During 1842 Mrs. Fry met Prince Albert, with several leading members of the Government, to talk over prison reform. On this occasion she pleaded earnestly with Sir Robert Peel on

behalf of prisoners confined in perfectly dark cells, and entreated that some light should be admitted into them.

Here during the same year she met again the King of Prussia and several members of the English Royal Family. Before these she gave a Bible reading at Newgate, and entertained the Prussian King afterwards at her little home in Upton lane.

Near the end of 1842, during a stay at Cromer, Mrs. Fry was rejoiced by the Government appointment of two matrons to a convict ship. This was a great step, as she well knew, in the right direction.

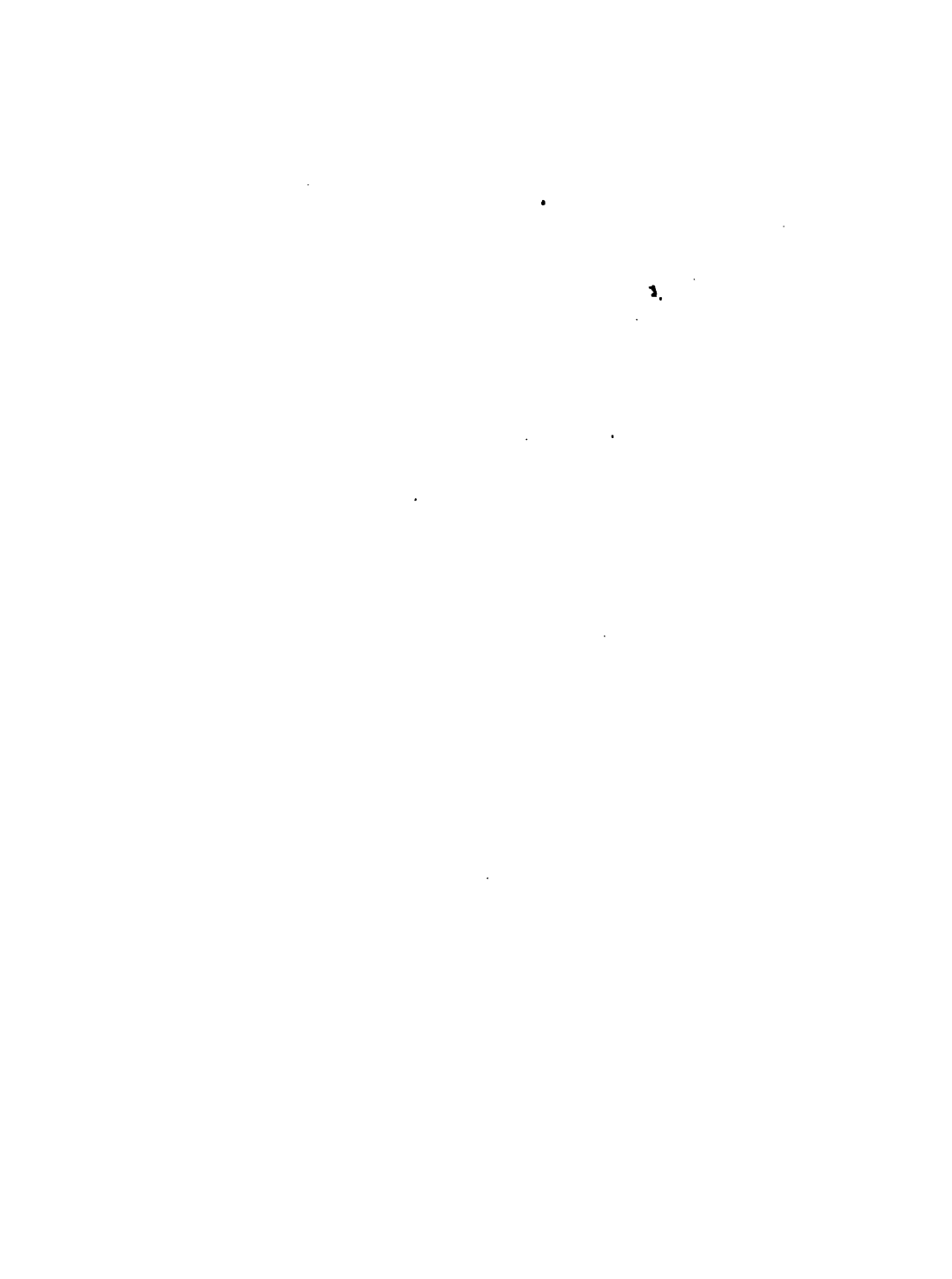
In 1843 she went for the last time to the continent. In Clermont en Aix she spoke to the nuns in charge of the Central Prison, as well as to the prisoners, with her daughter as interpreter. "Ah! she *is* good" said the Mother Superior, just expressing what all felt who came in contact with her.

She visited the Duchess of Orleans, and others of high rank, during this time, and held

several important public meetings. She was cheered to learn that interest in the state of prisons had been fully aroused, and a bill for their improvement brought before the Chamber of Deputies. In June 1843, Elizabeth Fry paid her last official visit as a minister, to the quarterly meeting at Hereford.

Only a few more weary months of suffering and the sword would be taken from the tired hands that never would have laid it down of themselves, but which wielded it so faithfully and well to the very end.

W. B. LUKE,
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